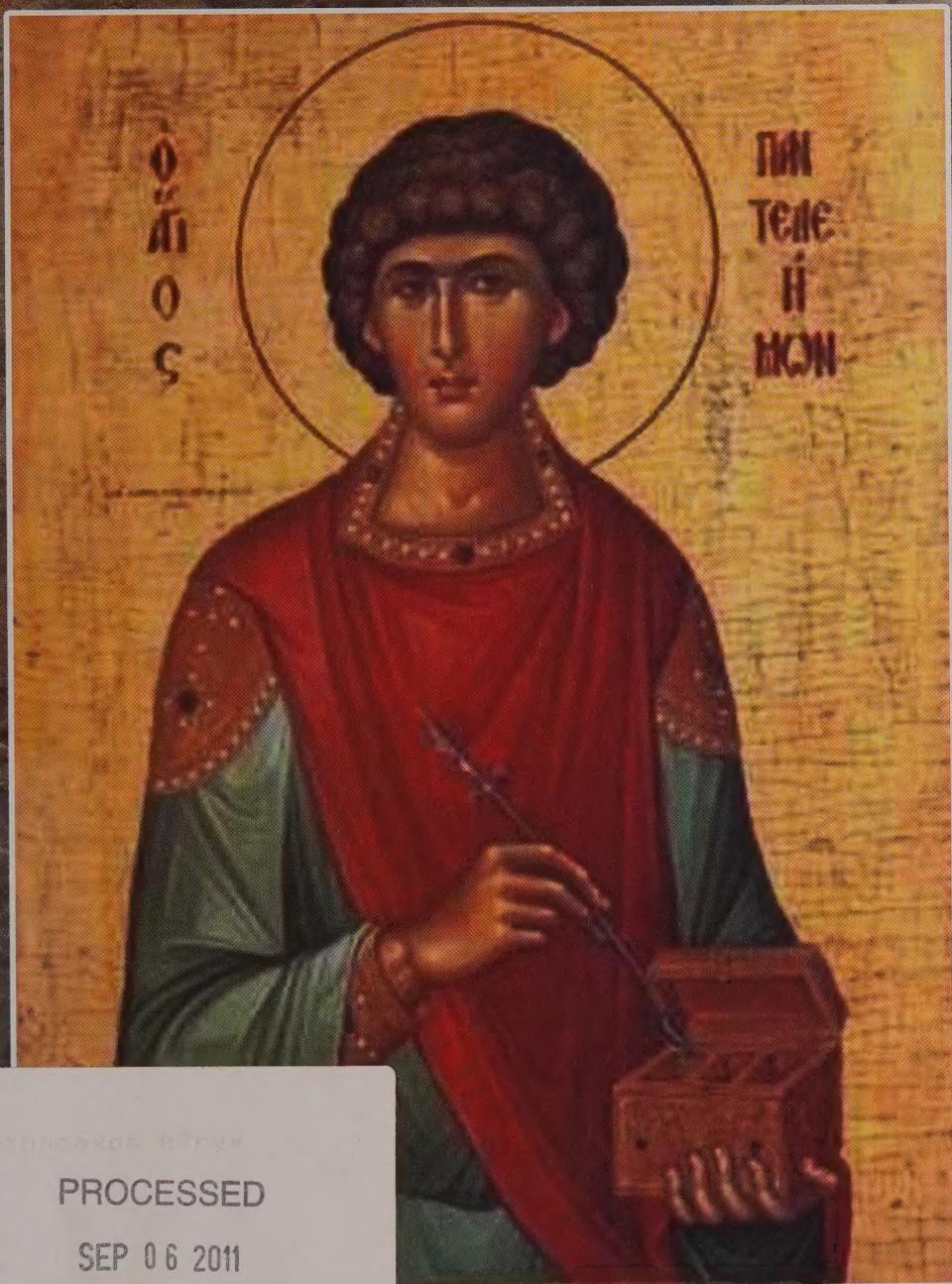


ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΚΗΡΥΞ

ΕΠΙΣΗΜΟΝ ΟΡΓΑΝΟΝ ΙΕΡΑΣ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗΣ ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ

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ΜΟΝΟ ΣΤΟ ΟΝΟΜΑ:

Greek Archdiocese Of Thyateira And Great Britain

Ἐγκύκλιο Γράμμα τοῦ Σεβασμιωτάτου Ἀρχιεπισκόπου κ. Γρηγορίου πρὸς τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο Πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Θυατείρων καὶ Μεγάλης Βρετανίας μέ τὴν εὐκαιρία τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ χαρμόσυνης Περιόδου τοῦ Δεκαπενταυγούστου.

Ἀγαπητοί μας ἐν Κυρίῳ

*Ἐν ταῖς ζάλαις, ἐφευρόν σε λιμένα ἐν ταῖς λύπαις,
χαρὰν καὶ εὐφροσύνην, καὶ ἐν ταῖς νόσοις ταχινὴν
βοήθειαν καὶ ἐν τοῖς κινδύνοις, ῥύστιν καὶ προστάτιν ἐν
τοῖς πειρατηρίοις.*

Μέ τὴν εἰσοδὸ μας στό μήνα Αὐγουστο, κατὰ παράδοση ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μας ψάλλει στοὺς Ναοὺς, κάθε βράδυ, τοὺς κατανυκτικούς Παρακλητικούς Κανόνες πρὸς τὴν Παναγία Θεοτόκο καὶ Μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν. Θὰ ψάλλουμε καὶ φέτος τὰ θαυμάσια αὐτὰ καὶ ἐμπνευσμένα Τραγούδια, τοὺς ὕμνους, πού φωτισμένοι ὕμνογράφοι πρὶν ἀπὸ πολλοὺς αἰῶνες συνέγραψαν καὶ ἔκτοτε χιλιοτραγουδῆσαν μυριάδες Ὁρθοδόξων Χριστιανῶν γιὰ νὰ τιμῆσουν τὴν Μάνα τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ νὰ διακηρύξουν τὴν ἀγοπαράδοτη διδασκαλία καὶ πίστη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας στό πρόσωπό Της. Οἱ Ἀκολουθίες αὐτές τελοῦνται τίς πρῶτες μέρες τοῦ Αὐγούστου ὡς ἱερὴ προσφορά τῶν πιστῶν πρὸς τὴν Παναγία, Μάνα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἡ ὁποία δέχθηκε στὰ σπλάχνα τῆς τὸν Σωτῆρα τοῦ Γένους ἡμῶν, Θεάνθρωπον Χριστόν. Οἱ ὕμνοι γράφθηκαν καὶ ψάλλονται σ' αὐτὴν τὴν περίοδο τοῦ Δεκαπενταυγούστου, πού οἱ Χριστιανοὶ γιορτάζουμε τὴν Κοίμηση τῆς Παναγίας, τὴν ἀποχώρησή της δηλαδή ἀπὸ τὴν σκηνὴ τοῦτου τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὴν ἀνοδὸ της στοὺς οὐρανοὺς γιὰ νὰ ἐνωθεῖ γιὰ πάντα μέ τὸν Μονογενὴ Υἱὸ Της Χριστόν. Ὅπως κάθε πλάσμα, πού ἔρχεται σέ τοῦτον τὸν κόσμο, πεθαίνει καὶ «ἐπιστρέφει εἰς τὴν γῆν ἐξ ἧς ἐλήφθη», ἔτσι καὶ ἡ Παναγία δέχθηκε τὸ κεντρί τοῦ θανάτου καὶ αὐτὸ ἀκριβῶς τὸ γεγονός γιορτάζουμε θεωρώντας τὸ ὡς ὁρόσημο τῆς ἱστορίας καὶ τὴν ζωὴ τῆς Μίας, Ἁγίας, Καθολικῆς καὶ Ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τῆς ὁποίας Κεφαλὴ καὶ Κύριος εἶναι ὁ Χριστός. Ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστός γεύτηκε τὸ κεντρί τοῦ θανάτου γιὰ νὰ ὁλοκληρώσει τὴν παγκόσμια ἀποστολὴ Του γιὰ τὴν σωτηρία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τὴν ἐπιστροφή Του «πάλιν εἰς τὸν Παράδεισον».

Δέν εἶναι βέβαια τυχαῖον ὅτι ἐμεῖς οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί, πού εἴμαστε οἱ Χριστιανοὶ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως, γιορτάζουμε κατὰ τρόπον μεγαλοπρεπῆ καὶ χαρμόσυνο τὴν Κοίμηση τῆς Παναγίας, καὶ τὴν γιορτὴ αὐτὴ τὴν θεωροῦμε ὡς τὸ Πάσχα τοῦ καλοκαιριοῦ. Δέν εἶναι τυχαῖο ἐπίσης ὅτι οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοὶ γιὰ δεκαπέντε μέρες γιορτάζουμε καὶ κάθε βράδυ ψάλλουμε στὴς Ἐκκλησίες καὶ τὰ σπίτια μας τὴν Μικρὴ καὶ τὴν Μεγάλῃ Παράκληση τῆς Παναγίας καὶ μαζί μέ τὸν ἐστεμμένον ποιητὴν ἐπαναλαμβάνουμε «Τῶν λυπηρῶν ἐπαγωγὰι χεμάζουσι τὴν ταπεινὴν μου ψυχὴν καὶ συμφορῶν νέφη τὴν ἐμὴν καλύπτουσι καρδίαν, Θεονύμφευτε».

Δέν μένει λοιπὸν ἀσυγκίνητη ἡ προσευχομένη καὶ στρατευομένη Ἐκκλησία, μπροστὰ στὸν πόνο καὶ τὸν θάνατον, μπροστὰ στὴς πολυποίκιλες δοκιμασίες καὶ

συμφορές, τίς ἀρρώστιες, τοὺς πολέμους, τίς αἰχμαλωσίες καὶ ὅλα τὰ λυπηρὰ πού μαστίζουν καθημερινὰ τὴν κοινωνία. Οἱ ὕμνοι τῆς Ἱερᾶς Παρακλήσεως εἶναι γεμάτοι ἀνθρωπιά, δίνουν παρηγορίαν καὶ θάρρος στὸν πονεμένο καὶ ἀνήσυχον ἀπὸ τίς μέριμνες τοῦ βίου ἄνθρωπο. Ξυπνοῦν μέσα του τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς εἰρήνης καὶ καλωσύνης τοῦ Θεοῦ πού πρέπει νὰ πρυτανεῖ στὴν ζωὴ του, τὴν προσωπικὴ καὶ τὴν δημόσια. Ἡ λέξη «πράκλῃσις» κρύβει μέσα της ἕνα πνευματικὸ, οὐράνιο ἀγγελικὸ κόσμο καὶ ὑπενθυμίζει ἱκετευτικά τὴν μυστικὴ σχέση μας μέ τὸν Θεό, καὶ τὴν ἀγάπη καὶ τὸ φῶς, τὰ ὁποῖα εἶναι ποτισμένα ἀπὸ τὴν χάριν καὶ τὴν κοινωνία τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος. Τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα μαλακώνει τοὺς πόνους καὶ ἀναπτερώνει τίς χαμένες ἐλπίδες· διώχνει τὸν φόβον τοῦ θανάτου καὶ ἀνυψώνει τὴν ψυχὴ μας στὸν οὐρανὸ· σκορπίζει τὰ μίσῃ, καὶ τὰ ἁμαρτωλὰ πάθη πού φωλιάζουν στὰ βάθη τοῦ εἶναι μας. Ὅπως χαρακτηριστικά λέγει ὁ θεὸς Παῦλος «Τὸ Πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν στεναγμοῖς ἀλάλητοις» (Ρωμ. Κεφ. 8, 26) γιὰ τὴν δικὴ μας παρηγορία καὶ ψυχικὴ γαλήνη καὶ σωτηρία.

Νὰ τρεξοῦμε, λοιπόν, στὴς Ἐκκλησίες καὶ νὰ ἐνώσουμε τίς προσευχές μας μέ ἐκεῖνες τῆς Παναγίας καὶ ἐκεῖνες τῶν Ἁγίων καὶ ὁλων τῶν Πιστῶν τοῦ Κόσμου. Νὰ γονατίσουμε μέ εὐλάβεια μπροστὰ στὸ εἰκόνισμα τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ νὰ ζητήσουμε τίς μεσιτείες της γιὰ τὴν οἰκογένειά μας, γιὰ τοὺς φίλους καὶ γιὰ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς μας, γιὰ τοὺς Ἀρχόντες τῆς Ἑλλάδος, τῆς Κύπρου, τῆς Μεγάλῃς Βρετανίας καὶ ὅλης τῆς Οἰκουμένης, στὰ χεῖρα τῶν ὁποίων εὐρίσκεται ἡ τύχη καὶ ἡ πρόοδος τῶν λαῶν. Μὴν λημονοῦμε ὅτι ἡ πίστις στὸ Θεό, ὅπως καὶ ἡ προσευχή, εἶναι ἀνίκητα ὅπλα στὸν ἀγῶνα μας γιὰ τὴν εἰρήνη καὶ τὴν εὐημερία τοῦ Σύμπαντος Κόσμου. Ἐναποθέτουμε τὸν ἑαυτό μας στὴν πρόνοια τοῦ ἐν Τριάδι δεδοξαμένου Θεοῦ καὶ λαμπροφανῶς γιορτάζουμε τὴν Κοίμηση τῆς Κυρίας Θεοτόκου, καὶ μαζί μέ τὸν ὑμνωδόν, ἐπαναλαμβάνουμε: «Δέσποινα καὶ μήτηρ τοῦ Λυτρωτοῦ, δέξαι παρακλήσεις ἀναξίων σῶν ἱκετῶν, ἵνα μεσιτεύσης πρὸς τὸν ἐκ σοῦ τεχθέντα ὦ Δέσποινα τοῦ κόσμου, γενοῦ μεσίτρια».

Μέ τίς πρεσβεῖες, Κύριε, τῆς Παναγίας Μάνας Σου, ἐλέησε καὶ σῶσε τὸν Κόσμον Σου ὡς μόνος ἀγαθός καὶ φιλόανθρωπος καὶ ἐλεήμων Θεός. Ἀμήν.

Λονδίνο, Αὐγουστος 2011

*Ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων
καὶ Μεγάλῃς Βρετανίας Γρηγόριος*

Ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων
καὶ Μεγάλῃς Βρετανίας Γρηγόριος

ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ ΣΕΒΑΣΜΙΩΤΑΤΟΥ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ Κ. ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΥ "ΤΟ ΤΡΑΓΙΚΟ 1974"

Εὐλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, Ἀξιότιμους
Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη

τῶν Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Ἐπιτροπῶν, τῶν Συλλόγων
καὶ Ὁργανώσεων, καὶ τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο Πλήρωμα
τῶν Κοινοτήτων τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς
Θυατείρων καὶ Μεγάλης Βρετανίας καὶ Ἰρλανδίας.

Ἀγαπητοί μας ἐν Κυρίῳ,

Ἀπευθύνουμε τὴν παροῦσα, μέ τὴν εὐκαιρία τῆς
ὀδυνηρῆς ἐπετείου τῶν τραγικῶν γεγονότων τοῦ
Ἰουλίου-Αὐγούστου 1974, τὰ ὁποῖα εἶχαν ὡς
ἀποτέλεσμα τὴν κατοχὴ μεγάλου μέρους τῆς
μαρτυρικῆς μας Μεγαλονήσου Κύπρου καὶ τὴν
ἐκρίζωση ἀπὸ τὶς πατρικὲς τοὺς ἐστίες ἐκατοντάδων
χιλιάδων κατοίκων τῆς.

Αὐτὲς οἱ μέρες τῆς Ἐπετείου τοῦ Πραξικοπήματος
καὶ τῆς Τουρκικῆς εἰσβολῆς, εἶναι μέρες προσευχῆς καὶ
πνευματικῆς περισυλλογῆς ὅλων τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς Ἑλλήνων.
Οἱ ἐπέτειοι, πού κάθε χρόνο ἐορτάζουμε οἱ Πανελλήνες,
εἶναι κυρίως ἡμερομηνίες καὶ γεγονότα, γιὰ τὰ ὁποῖα
ὕπερηφανεύομαστε. Ὅχι, ὅμως, καὶ αὐτὰ τοῦ Ἰουλίου
καὶ τοῦ Αὐγούστου 1974. Ἡ ἐπέτειος αὐτὴ εἶναι, – καὶ
πρέπει νὰ μὴν τὸ ξεχνᾶμε ποτέ αὐτό, – μία ὀδυνηρὴ
ἀνάμνηση, ἀλλὰ καὶ μία ἀκόμη εὐκαιρία ἱερᾶς
αὐτοκριτικῆς καὶ περισκέψεως καὶ ἀνανέωσης τῆς
μακαρίας ἐλπίδος καὶ ἀποφασιστικότητος: Δέν ξεχνᾶμε
τὴν εἰσβολή! Δέν ξεχνᾶμε τὰ ἀπαράβατα δίκαια καὶ
δικαιώματα τοῦ λαοῦ τῆς Κύπρου νὰ ζήσει φιλειρηνικά
καὶ δημιουργικά. Καλοῦμαστε, λοιπόν, νὰ
διατρανώσουμε γιὰ μία ἀκόμα φορά ὅτι θὰ ζήσουμε,
θὰ διαφυλάξουμε καὶ θὰ συνεχίσουμε τὴν μακραίωνα
ἱστορικὴ καὶ πολιτιστικὴ κληρονομιά, τὴν ὁποία
ἐπλούτισαν μέ τὸ Μήνυμα τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου τῆς ἀγάπης
πού ἔφεραν στὴν Κύπρο, πρὶν δύο χιλιάδες χρόνια,
οἱ Μεγάλοι Ἀπόστολοι Βαρνάβας, Παῦλος καὶ Ἰωάννης
Μάρκος.

Ὅμως αὐτὸ τὸ «δέν ξεχνᾶ» στέφεται πάντοτε μέ
ἐπιτυχία καὶ ἀποτελεσματικότητα ὅταν εἴμαστε
ἀγαπημένοι, ἀποβάλλουμε ἀπὸ μέσα μας καὶ γύρω μας
τὸ μῖσος, τὴν κακία, τὸν φθόνο, ὅταν μεταξύ μας

καλλιεργοῦμε τὴν συνεργασία καὶ τὴν ὁμόνοια, ὅταν
ἀναλογιζόμαστε ὅτι οἱ καταπατημένοι Τόπτοι καὶ οἱ
Ἐκκλησίες μας, τότε μόνον ἀπελευθερώνονται, ὅταν
εἴμαστε ἐμεῖς ἔτοιμοι νὰ ἀναλάβουμε ὁ καθένας τὶς
εὐθύνες καὶ τὶς ὑποχρεώσεις του καὶ νὰ
ἐμπιστευθοῦμε μέ πίστη καὶ αὐταπάρνηση τὸν Θεό
γιὰ τὴν δικαίωσή μας.

Καλοῦμε, λοιπόν, ἅπασαν τὴν Ὁμογένεια τοῦ
Ἑνωμένου Βασιλείου σέ κοινὸ ἐκκλησιασμό, νὰ μετᾶσχει
στὶς προσευχὲς καὶ τὰ Μνημόσυνα πού θὰ γίνουν
στοὺς Ἱερούς Ναοὺς μας αὐτὲς τὶς μέρες, γιὰ τὴν
ἀνάπαυση ὅλων ἐκείνων, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἔδωσαν τὴν ζωὴ
τοὺς γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία, τὴν πατρίδα, τὴν δημοκρατία
καὶ τὰ ἰδεώδη του Γένους. Νὰ προσευχηθοῦμε γιὰ τοὺς
πρόσφυγες, τοὺς ἀγνοούμενους καὶ τοὺς ξεριζωμένους
ἀδελφούς μας. Νὰ μνημονεύσουμε μέ εὐλάβεια καὶ
σεβασμὸ τοὺς ναῦτες καὶ πυροσβέστες πού ἔχασαν
τὴν ζωὴ τους στό μεγάλο τραγικὸ δυστύχημα τῆς
Δευτέρας, 11 Ἰουνίου 2011, στὴν ναυτικὴ βάση τῆς
Κύπρου καὶ νὰ προσευχηθοῦμε γιὰ τὶς οἰκογένειες
πού τόσο σκληρὰ ἔχασαν πρόσωπα προσφιλῆ καὶ
ἀγαπημένα στό ἄνθος τῆς ἡλικίας τους. Καλοῦμαστε
ἐπίσης ὅλοι στὴν φιλειρηνικὴ ἐκδήλωση πού ὀργανώνει,
ὅπως κάθε χρόνο, ἡ Ἑθνικὴ Κυπριακὴ Ὁμοσπονδία
Ἑνωμένου Βασιλείου στό Trafalgar Square τοῦ Λονδίνου,
τὴν Κυριακὴ 17 Ἰουλίου 2011, στὶς 3:00μμ., ὅπου θὰ
μιλήσει ὁ Κυβερνητικὸς ἐκπρόσωπος τῆς Κυπριακῆς
Δημοκρατίας κ. Στ. Στεφάνου καὶ Βρετανοὶ Βουλευτές,
φίλοι καὶ ὑπερασπιστὲς τῶν δικαίων τῆς Κύπρου.

Εὐχόμενοι δέ σέ ὅλους καὶ ὅλες σας Καλὸ Καλοκαίρι,
εἰρηνικὲς διακοπὲς καὶ ὑγεία καὶ δύναμη γιὰ νὰ
συνεχίσετε νὰ ἐνδιαφέρεστε γιὰ μία Κύπρο ἐνωμένη
καὶ ἀδιαίρετη καὶ τὴν ἐπικράτηση στό Νησί τῶν Ἁγίων,
τῆς γαλήνης, τῆς προόδου καὶ εὐημερίας, διατελοῦμε
μετὰ πολλῆς ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀγάπης καὶ θερμῶν εὐχῶν.

Λονδῖνο, Ἰούλιος 2011

*Ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων
καὶ Μεγάλης Βρετανίας Γρηγόριος*

**Ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων
καὶ Μεγάλης Βρετανίας Γρηγόριος**

ΕΚΘΕΣΙΣ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΤΡΙΤΗΣ ΣΥΝΑΝΤΗΣΕΩΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΥ ΣΥΝΕΛΕΥΣΕΩΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΧΟΝΤΩΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΕΝ ΤΑΙΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΚΑΙΣ ΝΗΣΟΙΣ

Ἡ Τρίτη Συνάντησις τῆς Πανορθόδοξου Συνελεύσεως τῶν Ἐπισκόπων τῶν ἐχόντων Ἐκκλησίας ἐν ταῖς Βρετανικαῖς Νήσοις ἔλαβε χώραν τὴν Πέμπτην, 30ὴν Ἰουνίου 2011, ἐν τῷ Ἱερῷ Ναῷ τῶν Ἀγίων Δώδεκα Ἀποστόλων, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. Πρὸ τῆς Συναντήσεως, οἱ Ἐπίσκοποι συνελειτούργησαν κατὰ τὴν διάρκειαν τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας ἐπὶ τῇ εὐκαιρίᾳ τῆς Ἑορταζούσης φιλοξενούσης Κοινότητος.

Οἱ κάτωθι Ἐπίσκοποι παρέστησαν εἰς τὴν συνεδρίαν:

- Ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων καὶ Μεγάλης Βρετανίας κ. Γρηγόριος (τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως)
- Ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Σουρώζ κ. Ἐλισσαῖος (τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Μόσχας)
- Ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Δυτικῆς καὶ Νοτίου Εὐρώπης κ. Ἰωσήφ (τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Ρουμανίας)
- Ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Βερολίνου, Γερμανίας καὶ Μεγάλης Βρετανίας κ. Μάρκος (τῆς Ὑπερὸρις Ὁρθοδόξου Ρωσικῆς Ἐκκλησίας)
- Ὁ Πανιερώτατος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Kerch κ. Ἀνατόλιος (τῆς Ἐπισκοπῆς Σουρώζ)
- Ὁ Θεοφιλέστατος Ἐπίσκοπος Τροπαίου κ. Ἀθανάσιος (τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Θυατείρων).

Δὲν ἡδυνήθησαν ἵνα παραστώσιν οἱ κάτωθι:

- Ὁ Πανιερώτατος Μητροπολίτης Δυτικῆς καὶ Κεντρῶς Εὐρώπης κ. Ἰωάννης (τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Ἀντιοχείας)
- Ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἐπίσκοπος Μεγάλης Βρετανίας καὶ Σκανδιναυίας κ. Dositej (τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Σερβίας)
- Ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Dmanisi καὶ Μεγάλης Βρετανίας κ. Ζήνων (τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Γεωργίας)
- Ὁ Πανιερώτατος Μητροπολίτης Κεντρῶς καὶ Δυτικῆς Εὐρώπης κ. Συμεὼν (τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Βουλγαρίας)
- Ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἐπίσκοπος Παρνασσῶ κ. Ἰωάννης (τῆς Οὐκρανικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐπισκοπῆς ἐν Μεγάλῃ Βρετανίᾳ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου)
- Ὁ Πανιερώτατος Μητροπολίτης Διοκλείας κ. Κάλλιστος (τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Θυατείρων), καὶ
- Ὁ Θεοφιλέστατος Ἐπίσκοπος Κυανέων κ. Χρυσόστομος (τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Θυατείρων).

Παρέστησαν ὡσαύτως εἰς τὴν Συνάντησιν οἱ κάτωθι:

- Ὁ Αἰδεσιμολογιώτατος Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Samir

Gholam

(ὡς ἐκπρόσωπος τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Δυτικῆς καὶ Κεντρῶς Εὐρώπης κ. Ἰωάννου)

- Ὁ Αἰδεσιμώτατος Dragan Lazic

(ὡς ἐκπρόσωπος τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου Μεγάλης Βρετανίας καὶ Σκανδιναυίας κ. Dositej)

- Ὁ Πανοσιολογιώτατος Ἀρχιμανδρίτης κ. Βασίλειος Παπαβασιλείου, (Γραμματεὺς)

Ἡ Συνάντησις τῶν Ἐπισκόπων ἤρξατο μετὰ τὴν πανηγυρικὴν γεύμα, τὴν προσφερθεῖν ὑπὸ τῆς φιλοξενούσης Κοινότητος.

Οἱ Ἐπίσκοποι συνεζήτησαν τὰ κάτωθι θέματα:

Α) Οἱ ποικίλοι τρόποι, οἱ ἀκολουθούμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν Ἐπισκοπῶν, προπαρασκευῆς τῆς Θείας Κοινωνίας, καὶ οἱ κανονισμοὶ ἀναφορικῶς πρὸς τοὺς μικτοὺς γάμους, ὡς καὶ ἡ δυνατότης συμπεφωνημένης θέσεως ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνωτέρω θεμάτων.

Β) Ὑλικὸν διὰ κατήχησιν καὶ ἡ ἐκπαίδευσις κληρικῶν καὶ κατηχητῶν.

Γ) Κανονικὰ θέματα ἀναφορικῶς πρὸς τὴν μεταπήδησιν καὶ τὰς ἐπισκέψεις κληρικῶν ἐκ τῆς μιᾶς εἰς τὴν ἄλλην ἐπισκοπὴν.

Δ) Ἡ προοπτικὴ διὰ μίαν Πανορθόδοξον Σύναξιν.

Οἱ Ἐπίσκοποι ἀπεφάσισαν ὅπως:

1. Ἡ Ποιμαντικὴ Ἐπιτροπὴ τῆς Συνελεύσεως (προεδρευομένη ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Ἐλισσαίου) ὀφείλει ὅπως ἐτοιμάσῃ ποιμαντικὰς εἰσηγήσεις ἀναφορικῶς πρὸς: α) τὴν προπαρασκευὴν τῆς Θείας Κοινωνίας, β) τοὺς μικτοὺς γάμους, καὶ γ) τὴν μεταπήδησιν κληρικῶν ἐκ τῆς μιᾶς εἰς τὴν ἄλλην Ἐπισκοπὴν.

2. Ἡ Ἐκπαιδευτικὴ Ἐπιτροπὴ τῆς Συνελεύσεως (προεδρευομένη ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Γρηγορίου) ὀφείλει ὅπως ἐξετάσῃ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα φυλλάδια καὶ ἔντυπα περὶ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας, τὴν Πίστιν καὶ τὰ Ἱερά Μυστήρια αὐτῆς, πρὸς μελέτην ὑπὸ τῆς Ἐπισκοπικῆς Συνελεύσεως.

Ἡ ἐπομένη Ἐπισκοπικὴ Συνέλευσις:

Ἡ ἐπομένη Ἐπισκοπικὴ Συνέλευσις θὰ λάβῃ χώραν τὴν Πέμπτην, 24ην Νοεμβρίου 2011, ἐν τῷ ἐν Λονδίνῳ Ἱερῷ Καθεδρικῷ Ναῷ Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ Ἀγίων Πάντων τῆς Ρωσικῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Ἐν Λονδίνῳ, τῇ 1ῇ Ἰουλίου 2011.

”Εργα αγάπης

Του Σεβ. Μητροπολίτου Καβάσων κ. Φιλήμονος
Πατριαρχείου Ἀλεξανδρείας

Βασική και ασύγκριτη προϋπόθεση για τον Χριστιανισμό είναι η έννοια της αγάπης, που αποτέλεσε, και για τον Χριστό και για τους διαδόχους Του, το πιο ισχυρότατο σύμβολο στην πορεία τους. Και δεν είναι μία απλή ανθρωπιστική εκδήλωση ή χριστιανική αγάπη, αλλά έχει βαθύτερο περιεχόμενο, επειδή είναι μία αντανάκλαστική φανέρωση της αγάπης του Θεού, που πρώτος μας αγάπησε.

Δεν υπάρχει πιο μεγαλύτερη δύναμη και πιο δυνατή άρετή από την αγάπη, αφού σε τελική ανάλυση αξιολογήσεως όλων των αρετών έχει το προβάδισμα, κι αυτή είναι εκείνη που θα θέσει τη βάση και θα αποτελέσει το κριτήριο και το αντικείμενο στην κρίση του Θεού όταν θα γίνει η τελική κρίση και διαλογή των ανθρώπων. Αυτή, και μπορούσε κανείς να πει, όδηγησε τον Άπ. Παύλο να την υμνήσει και να την παρουσιάσει σαν το βασικότερο γνώρισμα κάθε χριστιανού, μ' εκείνα τα σοφά του λόγια που απηύθυνε στους Κορινθίους, βεβαιώνοντάς τους για τη μεγάλη και άθανατη αξία της. Αυτή, με την απεριόριστη δύναμή της, έγινε ο συνδετικός κρίκος έπαφής μεταξύ των ανθρώπων, και στή συνέχεια, του ανθρώπου με το Θεό. Κατόρθωσε δε ο άνθρωπος με έργα αγάπης, αγάπης ανιδιοτελους, να μοιάσει με τον ίδιο τον Θεό, που είναι όλος αγάπη. Αυτή γνώρισαν και αυτή καλλιέργησαν κι απ' αυτής τά πλοκάμια πιάστηκαν οι θεμελιωτές της μέσα στη χριστιανική κοινωνία. Οι «αγάπες» της εποχής των Αποστόλων, τί άλλο υπήρξαν παρά άσκηση σ' έργα αγάπης, πουβρίσκαν τροφή και στήριξη οι κουρασμένοι και πεινασμένοι της ζωής. Η «Λογία» έπειτα, που την καθιέρωσε ο Θεός Άπόστολος των Εθνών Παύλος, υποχρεώνοντας τους χριστιανούς να προσφέρουν ο καθένας τους ό,τι μπορούσε για τους πάσχοντες στις εκκλησίες της Γαλιλαίας και της Κορίνθου, τί ήταν παρά έργα έμπρακτης αγάπης. Τά γνωστά μεγάλα τότε κέντρα της Ρώμης, Ἀλεξανδρείας, Ἀντιοχείας, Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, τί άλλο ήταν παρά έστιες, μέσα στις οποίες τροφοδοτείτο ή καλωσύνη και ή φιλανθρωπία, που ήταν άποκύημα αγάπης. Νά, γιατί ή αγάπη, έγραψε την ωραιότερη ιστορία μέσα στον κόσμο!

Φυσικά δεν θα πρέπει να μας διαφεύγει ή απεριόριστη προς τον Ουράνιο Πατέρα και Θεό μας αγάπη και ευγνωμοσύνη. Αυτόν πρώτα απ' όλα όφειλουμε ν' αγαπήσουμε για τό μεγάλο δώρο που μας χάρισε και που μ' αυτό μπορούμε ν' αγαπήσουμε και τον συνάνθρωπό μας.

Η άλληινή αγάπη μας προς τον άνθρωπο, έχει σαν ξεκίνημα, σαν άφετηρία, την αγάπη μας προς τον Θεό. Διότι, χωρίς αγάπη στον Θεό, δεν μπορεί ή αγάπη μας προς τον συνάνθρωπό μας, αφού -σύμφωνα με την χριστιανική διδασκαλία- πηγή της αγάπης είναι ο ίδιος ο Θεός. Είναι δυο πνευματικές ενότητες απόλυτα δεμένες μεταξύ τους, αγάπη προς τον Θεό και αγάπη προς τον άνθρωπο. Ό,τι ακριβώς αναφέρουν οι Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας μας και, συγκεκριμένα, ό,τι γράφει ο Μέγας Βασίλειος, πάνω στο ανεξάντλητο αυτό κεφάλαιο περί αγάπης. Αναφέρει λοιπόν ότι, όπως μία ψυχή χωρίς σώμα δεν μπορεί ν' ανα-

νθρωπος, ούτε πάλι σώμα χωρίς ψυχή, έτσι και ή αγάπη στον Θεό δεν είναι αγάπη, αν δεν συνοδεύεται και μ' αγάπη προς τον συνάνθρωπό μας. «Θά είσθε μαθηταί μου -τονίζει ο Κύριος- αν έχετε μεταξύ σας αγάπη». Ούτε μπορεί να υποστηρίξει ο άνθρωπος ότι αγαπά τον Θεό, αλλά νοιώθει μίσος για τον αδελφό του, διότι τότε ασύστολα ψεύδεται.

Οι δυο αγάπες, προς τον Θεό και προς τον άνθρωπο, μέσα στα πλαίσια της χριστιανικής διδασκαλίας, βρίσκονται σε άμεση σχέση, όπως αναφέρει σύγχρονος θεολόγος της Εκκλησίας μας. Στην προσπάθειά του δε ο κάθε άνθρωπος για να καταλήξει τελικά σ' έργα αγάπης, πρέπει να περάσει διαδοχικά πολλά προηγούμενα στάδια, ξεφεύγοντας από ήθικές διαβρωτικές καταστάσεις, ώστε να δημιουργήσει τις προϋποθέσεις εκείνες για μία ανυπόκριτη μορφή έργων αγάπης. Διότι έχουμε φανερές περιπτώσεις ανθρώπων που πιστεύουν ότι ή ζωή τους είναι μία έμπρακτη προσφορά έργων αγάπης, ενώ -εν γνώσει ή εν άγνοιά τους- ζουν μέσα σ' ένα κύκλωμα άνειλικρίνειας και φοβερής ύποκρισίας.

Πρέπει πλέον να καταλάβουμε τις ευθύνες μας για την υπέρτατη αυτή άρετή. Χρειάζεται να μεταβληθεί, και σε μας όλους, σε μία ένεργοποιούμενη μορφή δυνάμεως και δράσεως. Διότι κατάντησε στά χρόνια μας, αυτή ή κορωνίδα όλων των αρετών, να είναι ξερή και στεγνή και στείρα σ' εκδηλώσεις και σε πράξεις. Έφθασε μέσα στους κόλπους της ή αγάπη να δέχεται σπέρματα τελείως ξένα της συστάσεώς της, της προελεύσεώς της και του προορισμού της. Ένα νέφος γαμάτο από μαύρα σύννεφα ψεύτικης ή επικίνδυνης αγάπης σκιάζει τη δροσιά της. Άπουσιάζει ή γνήσια χριστιανική αγάπη και φυσικά και τά έργα της.

Όλοι μιλάμε γι' αυτό τό καυτό θέμα και όλοι μας παίρνουμε θέση, αλλά πόσοι, εκείνη τη στιγμή, είναι συνεπείς μ' όσα υποστηρίζουν και επικροτούν; Παντού, αντί για έργα αγάπης, ο άνθρωπος σκορπιά τό μίσος του και τη φαυλότητά του. Και είναι από τά έγκλήματα εκείνα που καμιά ανθρωπίνη νομοθεσία δεν μπορεί να τιμωρήσει και έτσι τό κακό εξαπλώνεται. Έξαπλώνεται και δεν ξέρουμε που τελικά θά φθάσουμε. Οι καιροί μας πολλά φανερά σημεία παρουσιάζουν αυτής της ελλείψεως από έργα αγάπης. Πόσο διαφορετική θάταν ή ζωή μας αν μπορούσαν και σήμερα να παρουσιαστούν μερικοί έστω καλοί Σαμαρείτες! Νά βρεθούν άνθρωποι με ανόθευτη όρμη για έργα και θυσίες, έχοντας σαν σκοπό τους τό στέγνωμα από τά βουρλωμένα μάτια πολλών απογοητευμένων διοκομένων υπάργεων. Νά σταθούν με ειλικρίνεια και όχι με ύπουλότητα στο πλευρό αυτών που έχουν την ανάγκη τους. Τότε οι εκδηλώσεις της αγάπης μας θά ήταν απαλλαγμένες από τό στοιχείο της ιδιοτέλειας και του συμφέροντος. Θά σταματούσαν μία για πάντα τά μεγάλα λόγια να κουράζουν τις διψασμένες ψυχές μας για λίγη αγάπη, αγάπη γρήγορη και άκίνδυνη.

Άραγε, θά μπορούσαμε κάποτε να βρούμε τον δρόμο της έμπρακτης χριστιανικής αγάπης, που μας χάραξε ο ίδρυτής της; Θά νοιώσουμε την ανάγκη επί τελους να ολοκληρωθούμε και ψυχικά και σαν άτομα και σαν χριστιανοί; Άς τό αποφασίσουμε, είναι πλέον καιρός!

Τό Μυστήριο τῆς Βάπτισης

Διακόνου Κωνσταντίνου Θεοχάρους

Μ

έ τόν ὄρο Μυστήρια ἀναφε-
ρόμαστε στίς θεοσύστατες
τελετές τῆς Ἐκκλησίας πού
εἶναι ἀπαραίτητες γιά τή
σωτηρία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Εἶναι θεοσύστατα τά Μυστήρια ἐπειδή τά ἱδρυσε εἴτε ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Θεάνθρωπος, εἴτε οἱ Ἀπόστολοι βασισμένοι στίς πράξεις καί τή διδασκαλία τοῦ Κυρίου, ὁδηγούμενοι ἀπό τό Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα. Τά Μυστήρια ἔχουν σκοπό τόν ἁγιασμό τῶν μελῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας καί τήν ἔνωσή τους μέ τόν Οὐράνιο Πατέρα. Εἶναι ἀγωγοί ψυχικῆς ἀνακαίνισης καί πνευματικῆς ζωῆς πού ὁδηγεῖ στήν σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς.

Ὀνομάζονται Μυστήρια ἐπειδή αὐτό πού τελεῖται καί μεταφέρουν εἶναι μυστικό καί ἀθέατο στους φυσικούς ὀφθαλμούς, δηλ. ὁ ἄνθρωπος δέν μπορεῖ νά ἀντιληφθεῖ μέ τίς ἐξωτερικές του αἰσθήσεις τή μεταβίβαση καί λειτουργία τῆς χάριτος στήν ψυχή του. Κατά συνέπεια, τά Μυστήρια ἔχουν διπλό χαρακτήρα, ἐξωτερικό καί ἐσωτερικό, πού ἀποτελεῖ τό διακριτικό χαρακτηριστικό τοῦ μυστηρίου. Σύμφωνα μέ τό χαρακτήρα αὐτό, τά Μυστήρια ἔχουν ταυτόχρονα τό ὁρατό καί ἀόρατο στοιχεῖο.

Τά Μυστήρια τελοῦνται μόνο ἀπό τόν ἐπίσκοπο καί τόν πρεσβύτερο πού ἔχουν ἀποστολική διαδοχή κατόπιν ἀδείας. Κατά τήν τέλεση τῶν ἱερῶν μυστηρίων οἱ εὐχές ἀναγινώσκονται σέ τρίτο ἐνικό πρόσωπο τό ὁποῖον δείχνει ὅτι ὁ τελῶν εἶναι ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστός.

Σύμφωνα μέ τόν κλασσικό ὀρισμό τῶν μυστηρίων, τά Μυστήρια στήν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία ἀριθμοῦνται σέ ἑπτά. Ὁ ἀριθμός τῶν ἑπτά μυστηρίων, στήν παράδοση τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας, ἀναφέρεται γιά πρώτη φορά τόν 13ο αἰῶνα. Ἀρκετοί Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας δέν προβαίνουν σέ καμία καταμέτρηση τῶν μυστηρίων. Ἀρίθμηση τῶν ἑπτά μυστηρίων ἔχουμε στήν σύνοδο τοῦ 1274 στή Λυών.

Αὐτά εἶναι:

1. Βάπτισμα: Τό ἱερὸ Βάπτισμα ἀναγεννᾷ πνευματικά τόν ἄνθρωπο. Εἶναι μιά ὑποχρεωτική πράξη γιά ὅποιον ἐπιθυμεῖ νά γίνει χριστιανός, πού πραγματοποιεῖται μέ τριπλῇ κατάδυση σέ νερό, στό ὄνομα τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδας καί δι' αὐτοῦ, ὁ ἄνθρωπος καθαρίζεται ἀπό κάθε ἁμαρτία. Τελεῖται μόνο μιά φορά.

2. Χρῖσμα: Τό Χρῖσμα εἶναι τό Μυστήριο πού σφραγίζει

μέ τίς δωρεές καί τά χαρίσματα τοῦ παναγίου Πνεύματος τή νέα πνευματική ζωή, πού ἀρχίζει μέ τό βάπτισμα καί συνεχίζεται μέ ἕνα βίο θεοφιλῆ καί φιλόχριστο. Ἐπίσης τό Μυστήριο αὐτό δέν ἐπαναλαμβάνεται.

3. Μετάνοια: Ἡ Μετάνοια εἶναι τό ἱερὸ Μυστήριο πού ἀποκαθιστᾷ τήν πνευματική ὑγεία τῆς ψυχῆς, ὅταν αὐτός πού μετανιώνει εἰλικρινά γιά τ' ἁμαρτήματά του καί τά ἐξομολογεῖται στόν πνευματικό τῆς Ἐκκλησίας λειτουργό, λαμβάνει ἄφεση ἁμαρτιῶν, γινόμενος καί πάλι φίλος καί τέκνο ἀγαπητοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τό Μυστήριο αὐτό ἐπαναλαμβάνεται, ἀνάλογα μέ τίς πνευματικές ἀνάγκες τῶν πιστῶν.

4. Θεία Εὐχαριστία: Ἡ Θεία Εὐχαριστία μᾶς τρέφει μέ τό σῶμα καί τό αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ καί μᾶς ἐνώνει μέ τόν Θεό. Οἱ Πατέρες, μᾶς συνιστοῦν τήν συχνή συμμετοχή στήν Θεία Εὐχαριστία, διότι αὐτή μεταδίδεται εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καί ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

5. Ἱερωσύνη: Ἡ Ἱερωσύνη εἶναι τό ἱερὸ Μυστήριο πού χορηγεῖ διά τῆς χειροτονίας στους κληρικούς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Τό Μυστήριο αὐτό δέν εἶναι ἐπαναλαμβανόμενο. Δόθηκε ἀπό τόν Ἰησοῦ Χριστό στους Ἀποστόλους καί τελικά τούς ἐπισκόπους. Τό Μυστήριο τῆς Ἱερωσύνης τελεῖται μόνο ἀπό τόν ἐπίσκοπο.

6. Γάμος: Ὁ Γάμος εἶναι τό Μυστήριο, διά τοῦ ὁποῖου δημιουργεῖται, εὐλογεῖται καί ἁγιαζεται ἡ οἰκογένεια. Κατ' οἰκονομία, τό Μυστήριο ἐπαναλαμβάνεται μέχρι τρεῖς φορές.

7. Εὐχέλαιο: Τό Ἅγιον Εὐχέλαιο εἶναι τό Μυστήριο πού παρέχει τή σωματική καί ψυχική ἴαση στά ἀσθενοῦντα μέλη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Στήν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μπορούμε νά τό τελέσουμε ὅποτε θέλουμε. Δέν ὑπάρχει κανένας περιορισμός ὡς πρὸς τό χρόνο τῆς τέλεσης τοῦ μυστηρίου.

Στήν ὀρθόδοξη θεολογία καί ζωή, τά Μυστήρια ἀποτελοῦν τίς πύλες διά τῶν ὁποίων ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐρχεται σέ ἐπικοινωνία καί κοινωνία μέ τό Θεόν.

Στό παρόν κείμενο θά ἀναφερθοῦμε στό ἱερὸ Μυστήριο

της Βάπτισης. Τό ρήμα «βαπτίζω» σημαίνει βυθίζω στο νερό. Ἀρχή καί κέντρο ὅλων τῶν μυστηρίων τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, εἶναι τό Ἅγιο Βάπτισμα, διότι μ' αὐτό ὁ ἄνθρωπος γίνεται χριστιανός, μέλος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Συστατική γενέθλια πράξη τοῦ Βαπτίσματος εἶναι ἡ Βάπτισμα τοῦ Κυρίου ἀπό τόν Ἰωάννη τόν Πρόδρομο στόν Ἰορδάνη ποταμό. Ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστός, πρὶν ἀπό τήν Ἀνάλημή Του, παρήγγειλε στούς μαθητές Του λέγοντάς τους: "Πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτούς εἰς τό ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καί τοῦ Υἱοῦ καί τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος" (Ματθ. 28,19). Τό Βάπτισμα, λοιπόν, εἶναι θεμελιωμένο στή ζωή καί τή διδασκαλία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καί γι' αὐτό ἀποτελεσε ἀπό τὰ πρῶτα χριστιανικά χρόνια τό Μυστήριον, μέ τό ὁποῖο ὁ ἄνθρωπος λαμβάνει τή χάρι τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀναγεννιέται καί γίνεται κοινωνός τῆς νέας ζωῆς τοῦ ἐγκαινιάσε ὁ Χριστός μέ τή Σάρκωση, τή Βάπτισμα, τή Σταύρωση καί τήν Ἀνάστασή Του.

Ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστός μᾶς διδάσκει: "ἐάν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καί Πνεύματος, οὐ δύναται εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τήν Βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ" (Ἰωάν. γ' 5). Σπὴν κολυμβήθρα, λοιπόν, γεννιέται ὁ νέος ἄνθρωπος. Μέ τό Βάπτισμα ὁ βαπτιζόμενος ἀπαλλάσσεται ἀπό τό προπατορικό ἁμάρτημα καί δέχεται ὡς θεία δωρεά τή ζωή καί τό φῶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, πρᾶγμα πού τόν καθιστᾷ ὑπεύθυνον φύλακα καί ἐργάτη τῶν ἐντολῶν Του. Ἐτσι τό Βάπτισμα δέν εἶναι μία πράξη μαγική, ἀλλά μία δυνατότητα πού, γιά νά καρποφορήσει, ἀπαιτεῖ τόν προσωπικό ἀγῶνα. Ἐπειδή, ὅμως, τό νήπιο δέν ἔχει ἐπίγνωση τῆς σημασίας τοῦ Μυστηρίου, ἐναπόκειται στούς γονεῖς καί στόν ἀνάδοχο νά καθοδηγήσουν τόν βαπτιζόμενο στό δρόμο τοῦ Χριστοῦ μέ τίς συμβουλές καί τίς παραινέσεις τους, προπάντων ὅμως μέ τό παράδειγμά τους. Γιά τοῦτο τόν λόγο ὁ ρόλος τοῦ ἀναδόχου εἶναι σημαντικός. Ὁ νονός, ὡς ἐκπρόσωπος τοῦ βρέφους, δεσμεύεται νά διδάξει σέ αὐτό τίς ἀρχές τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Χριστιανικῆς ὁμολογίας, γιά τοῦτο ἐπιβάλλεται νά εἶναι ὀρθόδοξος.

Τό ὄνομα πού δίνουμε στό παιδί κατά τήν ὄγδοη ἡμέρα, εἶναι σημαντικό διότι εἶναι δηλωτικό τῆς προσωπικότητάς μας καί τῆς χριστιανικῆς μας ταυτότητας. Σημαίνει ἀκόμη ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία μᾶς ἐντάσσει στήν κοινωνία τῶν ἁγίων, τῶν ὁποίων ὁ κάθε ἕνας ἀπό ἐμᾶς φέρει καί ἕνα ὄνομά τους, καί θέτει σάν στόχο καί ὄραμα τή μεταμόρφωση τῆς ζωῆς μας καί τήν προοπτική γιά τήν οὐράνια βασιλεία τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἐτσι κάθε φορά πού γιορτάζουμε τά ὀνομαστήριά μας ἀνανεώνουμε συγχρόνως καί αὐτήν τήν ἐλπίδα.

Ἐτσι, τό Μυστήριον τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰσάγει τόν ἄνθρωπο στήν Ἐκκλησία καί τόν ἀναγεννᾷ πνευματικά. Εἶναι μία ὑποχρεωτική πράξη γιά ὅποιον ἐπιθυμεῖ νά γίνει χριστιανός, ἡ ὁποία πραγματοποιεῖται μέ τριπλή κατάδυση σέ νερό, στό ὄνομα τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδας καί δι' αὐτοῦ, ὁ

ἄνθρωπος καθαρίζεται ἀπό κάθε ἁμαρτία. Τό Μυστήριον τοῦτο τελεῖται μόνο μία φορά στή ζωή τοῦ κάθε ἀνθρώπου, δηλ. δέν ἐπαναλαμβάνεται. Πρὶν τόν βον αἰῶνα ἡ βάπτισμα γινόταν σέ μεγάλη ἡλικία τήν ὥρα τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας, ἀλλά ἐπεκράτησε σήμερα νά γίνεται στήν παιδική ἡλικία διότι πολλά παιδιά πέθαιναν ἀβάπτιστα.

Τό ἁγιασμένο λάδι πού χρησιμοποιεῖται θεραπεύει τὰ τραύματα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, καί θωρακίζει τὰ σώματα τῶν ἀθλητῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Τό νερό εἶναι σύμβολο τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ λόγω τῆς φυσικῆς του ιδιότητος νά καθαρίζει, σύμβολο τῆς ζωῆς, γιατί χωρίς αὐτό ζωή δέν ὑπάρχει, καί σύμβολο τοῦ θανάτου, ἐπειδή πνίγει, σκοτώνει καί ἐκμηδενίζει.

Τό Βάπτισμα, μέ τή δύναμη τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, γίνεται πνευματικό καί ἅγιο, ἱκανό νά ἁγιαίνει κάθε ἄνθρωπο. Ἐτσι μέ τίς τρεῖς καταδύσεις συνθάπτεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος μέ τόν Χριστό. Με τίς τρεῖς ἀναβάσεις συνανασταίνεται μαζί του. Οἱ περιφορὰ τοῦ ἱερέως, τοῦ ἀναδόχου καί τοῦ βαπτισθέντος γύρω ἀπό τήν κολυμβήθρα εἶναι ἔκφραση χαρᾶς καί καλωσόρισμα τοῦ νέου μέλους ἀπό τήν Ἐκκλησία.

Τά βαπτιστικά ἐνδύματα πρέπει νά ἔχουν λευκό χρῶμα. Τό λευκό χρῶμα συμβολίζει τή λαμπρότητα τῆς ψυχῆς. Στό λευκό χρῶμα ἡ Ἐκκλησία βλέπει τή λευκή στολή τῶν ἁγίων καί τῶν μαρτύρων στόν παράδεισο, τὰ λευκά ἐνδύματα τῶν ἀγγέλων στήν ἀνάσταση καί στήν ἀνάληψη, τὰ ἱμάτια τοῦ μεταμορφωμένου Χριστοῦ, τόν ὁποῖο ντύνεται ὁ νεοφώτιστος. Ἡ λαμπάδα εἶναι τό σύμβολο τοῦ φωτισμοῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μαρτυρία τῆς αἴγλης καί τῆς δόξας πού δεχόμαστε ἀπό τό Θεό. Εἶναι ἡ λαμπάδα τῆς πίστεως μέ τήν ὁποία θά συναντήσουμε τό νυμφίον Χριστό. Τό κούρεμα τῶν μαλλιών γίνεται σάν προσφορά ἀπό τόν βαπτιζόμενο στόν Θεό. Εἶναι τρόπος εὐχαριστίας στόν Θεό πού ἔπλασε τόν ἄνθρωπο.

Μαζί μέ τό Μυστήριον τῆς Βάπτισμας τελεῖται καί τό Μυστήριον τοῦ Χρίσματος. Μέ τήν συνεχόμενη μυστηριακή καί μαρτυριακή ζωή καί τήν πῆρση τῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ μπορεῖ ὁ νεοφώτιστος νά ζεῖ "ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς" καί νά ἀνανεώνει τίς δυνάμεις πού πῆρε ἀπό τό βάπτισμα. Στό τέλος τοῦ Μυστηρίου, ὁ νέος ὀρθόδοξος Χριστιανός ἀξιώνεται γιά πρώτη φορά νά μεταλάβει τῶν ἀχράντων μυστηρίων.

Πηγές:

- ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ ΕΚΔΟΣΗ ΙΕΡΑΣ ΣΥΝΟΔΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΚΥΠΡΟΥ
- ΕΠΙΤΟΜΟΣ ΔΟΓΜΑΤΙΚΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΥ ΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ ΕΚΔΟΣΙΣ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ 1955
- ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗ ΗΘΙΚΗ II ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ Ι. ΜΑΝΤΖΑΡΙΔΗ

ΕΠΑΦΕΣ ΤΟΥ ΣΕΒΑΣΜΙΩΤΑΤΟΥ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ κ. ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΥ

ΜΑΪΟΣ

1. Το πρωί, τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό Αγίου Γεωργίου του Μεγαλομάρτυρος στην ομώνυμη Ελληνική Ορθόδοξη Κοινότητα Kingston-upon-Thames, όπου και παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα.
2. Το πρωί τον επισκέφθηκε ο Λαυρέντης Λαυρεντιάδης. Το βράδυ προήδρευσε Συνεδρία για την ίδρυση Ημερησίου Ορθόδοξου Ομολογιακού Σχολείου Μέσης Εκπαίδευσης στο Βόρειο Λονδίνο.
3. Τέλεσε την Νεκρώσιμη Ακολουθία για την Μαρία Πέτρου Γιάννουλλου, στον Ιερό Ναό Αγίου Ιωάννη του Θεολόγου, Hackney Ανατολικού Λονδίνου.
4. Το πρωί ανεχώρησε για την Κωνσταντινούπολη. Ακολουθώντας ειδική συνομιλία με την Α.Θ. Παναγιώτητα τον Οικουμενικό Πατριάρχη κ.κ. Βαρθολομαίο, το δε βράδυ παρέκάθισε σε Δείπνο με τα λοιπά Μέλη της Ιεράς Συνόδου του Πατριαρχείου.
5. Καθ' όλη την διάρκεια της ημέρας μετέσχε των Συνεδριάσεων της Ιεράς Συνόδου. Το βράδυ παρέκάθισε σε Δείπνο σε εστιατόριο της Πόλης.
6. Το πρωί επισκέφθηκε διάφορα Γραφεία του Πατριαρχείου και στη συνέχεια μετέσχε των Συνεδριάσεων της Ιεράς Συνόδου.
7. Επέστρεψε στο Λονδίνο το πρωί. Το βράδυ παρέστη στην Ετήσια Κοινωνική Εκδήλωση της Hellenic Bankers' Society στο ξενοδοχείο Claridges.
8. Το πρωί τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον εορτάζοντα Ιερό Ναό του Αγίου Ιωάννη, Hackney, όπου και παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα. Το απόγευμα τον επισκέφθηκε η Melissa Birol.
9. Μετέβη στην πόλη Nottingham όπου προήδρευσε του Συνεδρίου του Ιερού Κλήρου της Αρχιεπισκοπής, αφού προηγουμένως παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα με τους Συνέδρους, που παρέθεσε η τοπική Κοινότητα Παναγίας της Ελεούσης. Η εναρκτήρια ομιλία του είχε θέμα «Η Ιερά Αρχιεπισκοπή Θυατείρων και Μ. Βρετανίας – Προβλήματα και Προοπτικές του Παρόντος και του Μέλλοντος». Η συνεδρία συνεχίστηκε και το απόγευμα, παρέστη δε στη συνέχεια στον Εσπερινό στον Ιερό Ναό της Κοινότητας και το βράδυ παρέκάθισε σε Δείπνο με όλους τους Συνέδρους σε ξενοδοχείο της πόλης Nottingham.
10. Το πρωί τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό των Αγίων Κυρίλλου και Μεθοδίου στην πόλη Mansfield και στη συνέχεια προήδρευσε της τρίτης συνεδρίασης στους χώρους του εν λόγω Ναού. Μετά το Γεύμα, επισκέφθη μαζί με τους Συνέδρους το Newstead Abbey, την γενέτειρα του Λόρδου Βύρωνος, όπου και τέλεσε Τρισάγιο για τον φιλέλληνα αυτόν. Επιστρέψας στο Mansfield, παρέστη στον Εσπερινό που έγινε στον Ιερό Ναό της Κοινότητας, παρέκάθισε δε στη συνέχεια σε Δείπνο και ακολουθώντας επέστρεψε στην πόλη Nottingham.
11. Το πρωί παρέστη στην Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό Παναγίας της Ελεούσης, Nottingham, και στη συνέχεια προήδρευσε της τέταρτης συνεδρίασης. Μετά επέστρεψε στο Λονδίνο.
12. Το πρωί τέλεσε Τρισάγιο στο Παρεκκλήσιο της Αρχιεπισκοπής για αποβιώσαντα μέλη της οικογενείας Σπύρου Μεταξά. Στη συνέχεια τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο Σάββας Χαράλαμπος, η Annie Berchi, ο Πρέσβυς της Λατβίας Eduards Stiprais, και ο Γεώργιος Αργύρης.
13. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο Κύπρος Νίκολας (με τον οποίο παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα), ο Ανδρέας Αυγουστής και ο Ιερομόναχος Patrick Ramsey.
14. Το βράδυ παρέστη στην Ετήσια Κοινωνική Εκδήλωση της Κοινότητας των Αγίων Δώδεκα Αποστόλων, Hatfield.
15. Το πρωί, τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό των Αγίων Κυρίλλου και Μεθοδίου, Mansfield, στη διάρκεια της οποίας ανένευσε το εκκλησιαστικό οφφίκιο του Πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου στον Οικονόμο π. Φωκά Χατζηλοϊζή. Στη συνέχεια παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα που παρέθεσε η τοπική Κοινότητα.
16. Προσκληθείς παρέστη στην εορταστική εκδήλωση που οργάνωσε σε κεντρικό ξενοδοχείο του Λονδίνου η Πρεσβεία του Ισραήλ με την ευκαιρία της 63ης επετείου από της ανακρίψεως της χώρας της ως Ανεξάρτητο Κράτος. Το βράδυ παρέστη στην εορταστική εκδήλωση για τα 90χρονα του Μιχάλη Χριστοδουλίδη, στο σπίτι της Κυπριακής Αδελφότητας Λονδίνου.
17. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο Φίλιος Γραμμενόπουλος, και ο Καθηγητής Richard Clogg συνοδευόμενος από τον Δρα Χαράλαμφο Δενδρινό (με τους οποίους παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα). Το βράδυ παρέστη στην τελετή ανάληψης των Δημαρχειακών Καθηκόντων της Λίζας Rutter ως Δημάρχου Barnet και στη συνέχεια στην Δεξίωση. Αργότερα προήδρευσε συνεδρίας του Εκκλησιαστικού Συμβουλίου της Κοινότητας Αγίου Δημητρίου, Edmonton Βορείου Λονδίνου.
18. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά η Ιουλίτσα Οικιάδου, η Παναγιώτα Σουλελέ, Χαρούλα Γεωργοπούλου και Ελεάνα Γρηγορίου, το ζεύγος Gregory και Χριστιάνος Wellington, ο Διονύσιος Πανταζής και ο Μητροπολίτης Διοκλείας Κάλιστος. Το βράδυ παρέστη στον Αγγλικανικό Εσπερινό και την Οικουμενική Δεξίωση που οργάνωσε το Nikaeen Club στο Παλάτιο του Λάρμπεθ.
19. Μετέβη στην πόλη του Southampton όπου τέλεσε την Νεκρώσιμη Ακολουθία για την Μαρίνα Γρηγόρη Χατζηκυριάκου στον εκεί Ορθόδοξο Ναό του Αγίου Νικολάου, όπως και τον ενταφιασμό της στο κοιμητήριο της πόλης, όπου και ανέγνωσε Τρισάγιο για τους ενταφιασθέντες εκεί Ορθοδόξους Χριστιανούς.
20. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά η Ευθυμία Τρίχα, ο Κώστας Χριστοφίδης, η Αφροδίτη Παύλου, ο Ιωάννης Κυριακίδης, και οι Ανδρέας Ιωάννου, Γεώργιος Καλλής και Αντώνης Θεοδώρου. Στη συνέχεια επισκέφθηκε ασθενή στο Νοσοκομείο St. Mary's, Paddington.
21. Το βράδυ προσκληθείς παρέκάθισε στην Κοινωνική Εκδήλωση που οργάνωσε η Βοηθητική Αδελφότητα Κυριών της Κοινότητας Τιμίου Σταυρού και Αρχαγγέλου Μιχαήλ, Golders Green Λονδίνου, στην Αίθουσα Δεξιώσεων της Κοινότητας.
22. Τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό Μεταμορφώσεως του Κυρίου στην πόλη Coventry, όπου και παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα και στη συνέχεια προήδρευσε συνεδρίας της Εκκλησιαστικής Επιτροπής και των Κηδεμόνων της Κοινότητας. Επιστρέψας στο Λονδίνο, προσκληθείς παρέκάθισε σε Δείπνο που οργάνωσαν ο Πρέσβυς της Ρωσίας και ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σουροζή Ελισσαίος με την ευκαιρία της Ημέρας Σλαβικών Γραπτών Έργων και Πολιτισμού.
23. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά η Anna Stacy-Atman, (δύο Μέλη του Εκκλησιαστικού Συμβουλίου της Κοινότητας Αγίας Τριάδος, Brighton) συνοδευόμενα από τον Αρχιμανδρίτη Γερμανό Κουρκούνη, το ζεύγος Michael και Tanya Turner, και η Πολυξένη Νικολάου.
24. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά οι Σάββας και Στέλιος Βιολάρη, και ο Ιωάννης Κούβαρος.
25. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο Ιωάννης Πολυκανδριώτης, η Ιουλίτσα Ερωτοκρίτου και Ειρήνη και Κατερίνα Κιμιτίου, και οι Χάρης και Μαίρη Σοφοκλείδη (με τους οποίους και παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα σε εστιατόριο στο Mayfair Λονδίνου).
26. Το πρωί παρέστη και μίλησε στο Inter-Faith Conference με θέμα «Εξετάζοντας τον Ρόλο Πίστης στην Δημόσια Ζωή» που οργάνωσε η Κίνηση «Θρησκείες για Ειρήνη» (Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου) στο St. Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Bishopsgate Λονδίνου. Το απόγευμα ανεχώρησε αεροπορικά για την Πράγα, όπου τον υποδέχθηκε στο αεροδρόμιο της πόλης ο Μακαριώτατος Μητροπολίτης Christofer.
27. Επισκέφθηκε διάφορα αξιοθέατα της Πράγας.
28. Το πρωί συνεleitώρησε ως εκπρόσωπος του Οικουμενικού Πατριάρχη στην Θεία Λειτουργία στον Καθεδρικό Ναό Αγίων Κυρίλλου και Μεθοδίου Πράγας με την ευκαιρία συμπλήρωσης πενταετίας από της εκλογής του Αρχιεπισκόπου Christofer ως Μητροπολίτη Τσεχίας και Σλοβακίας. Συνεleitώρησαν επίσης, εκπρόσωποι των Πατριαρχείων Μόσχας, Ρουμανίας, Βουλγαρίας και Γεωργίας, και των Εκκλησιών Ελλάδος και Πολωνίας. Επέστρεψε στο Λονδίνο το απόγευμα.
29. Το πρωί τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό Παναγίας Χρυσελευούσης και Αγίας Μαρίνης, Stoke-on-Trent, όπου και παρέκάθισε σε Γεύμα. Το απόγευμα ευλόγησε τους γάμους του Κωνσταντίνου Δ. Μάρκου και της Jade Ella Mason, στον Ιερό Καθεδρικό Ναό Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου και Απ. Ανδρέα, Birmingham, παρέκάθισε δε και στο Γαμήλιο Δείπνο.
30. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο Παντελής Αγιώτης και ο Μάρκος Elgrohary.
31. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο Πρέσβυς της Ελλάδος στο Λονδίνο,

Αρσιτείδης Σάνδης, ο Δημήτριος Σαλαπάτας, ο Γεώργιος Ορφανός συνοδευόμενος από την θυγατέρα του, Γεωργία (με τους οποίους παρέκάρησε σε Γεύμα), και η Δρ. Iskra Kocena.

ΙΟΥΝΙΟΣ

1. Το πρωί επισκέφθηκε τον Ελληνικό Ραδιοσταθμό Λονδίνου (L.G.R.). Το μεσημέρι παρέκάρησε σε Γεύμα με τον κ. Παπατόλια. Το απόγευμα τον επισκέφθηκαν ο Ιωάννης Παρέας και ο Κωνσταντίνος Κάλαθος.
2. Τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Καθεδρικό Ναό Αγίας Σοφίας Λονδίνου. Το απόγευμα έδωσε συνέντευξη στη Nina Dos Santos του C.N.N. (News), και στη συνέχεια τον επισκέφθηκε ο Aleksandr Nekrashov (συνδεδεμένος από τον Zonas Bichenov).
3. Ανεχώρησε αεροπορικά για την Τουρκία με ομάδα προσκυνητών προς επίσκεψη εκκλησιών αναφερομένων στο Βιβλίο της Αποκαλύψεως. Πρώτος σταθμός η Κωνσταντινούπολη, στη συνέχεια η Σμύρνη και ακολούθως η Λαοδικεία (Denizli), όπου και διανυκτέρευσε.
4. Το πρωί επισκέφθηκαν τα ερείπια της Λαοδικείας και της Ιεράπολης (Pamukkale), όπου είδαν τις θερμές πηγές και το Μαρτύριο του Αγίου Φιλίππου, διανυκτέρευσαν δε και πάλιν στο Denizli.
5. Το πρωί τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό της Αγίας Φωτεινής στην Σμύρνη, επισκέφθηκαν δε στη συνέχεια διάφορα αξιοθέατα της άλλοτε ακμάζουσας αυτής Ελληνικής μεγαλούπολης. Ακολούθως μετέβησαν στα Θυάτεια (Akhisar), όπου επισκέφθηκαν τα ερείπια της αρχαίας βασιλικής στο κέντρο της πόλης, προσευχήθηκε δε για τους πιστούς της Αρχιεπισκοπής, όπου και διανυκτέρευσαν.
6. Το πρωί επισκέφθηκαν την Πέργαμο (Bergama), όπου είδαν τους περίφημους κλασικούς ναούς και την «Κόκκινη Βασιλική», και τις Σάρεις (Sart Koy), με τα κλασικά, τα Ιουδαϊκά και τα Χριστιανικά αξιοθέατα, επέστρεψαν δε πάλιν στα Θυάτεια, όπου και διανυκτέρευσαν.
7. Το πρωί επισκέφθηκαν την Φιλαδέλφεια και ακολούθως επέστρεψε στην Σμύρνη και από εκεί στην Κωνσταντινούπολη, στο Πατριαρχείο.
8. Το πρωί μετέσχε των συνεδριάσεων της Ιεράς Συνόδου. Το βράδυ επισκέφθηκε την έκθεση «Έλληνες Ζωγράφοι της Κωνσταντινούπολης» που έγινε στο Μουσείο του Τορκάρι.
9. Το πρωί μετέσχε των συνεδριάσεων της Ιεράς Συνόδου. Το βράδυ, παρέστη στον Μεγάλο Εσπερινό στον Πατριαρχικό Ναό του Αγίου Γεωργίου, με την ευκαιρία της επερχόμενης εορτής των Αγίων Βαρνάβα και Βαρθολομαίου.
10. Το πρωί παρέστη στην Θεία Λειτουργία στον Πατριαρχικό Ναό του Αγίου Γεωργίου, προεξάρχοντας του Οικουμενικού Πατριάρχου κ.κ. Βαρθολομαίου, ο οποίος εόρταζε. Στην συνέχεια παρέκάρησε σε Γεύμα που παρέθεσε ο εορτάζων Πατριάρχης σε εστιατόριο της Πόλης. Το βράδυ επέστρεψε αεροπορικά στο Λονδίνο.
11. Το βράδυ παρέκάρησε σε Δείπνο που παρέθεσε η Κοινότητα Τιμίου Σταυρού και Αρχαγγέλου Μιχαήλ, Golders Green Λονδίνου.
12. Το πρωί, τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία και στη συνέχεια τον Εσπερινό της Γονυκλισίας στον Καθεδρικό Ναό Αγίας Σοφίας Λονδίνου.
13. Το πρωί, τέλεσε και πάλιν την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Καθεδρικό Ναό Αγίας Σοφίας Λονδίνου. Το απόγευμα τον επισκέφθηκε ο Γενικός Διευθυντής του Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών Κύπρου, Νικόλαος Αμιλίου, συνοδευόμενος από τον Ύπατο Αρμοστή της Κύπρου στο Λονδίνο, Αλέξανδρο Ζήνωνα, τον Αναπληρωτή Ύπατο Αρμοστή, Γεώργιο Χριστοφή, και τον Γενικό Πρόξενο της Κύπρου, Γεώργιο Γεωργίου.
14. Καθ' όλη την ημέρα, μετέσχε των Άτυπων Συνομιλιών μεταξύ του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου και της Αγγλικής Κοινωνίας στο Παλάτι του Λάμπεθ. Επιστρέψας στην Αρχιεπισκοπή, τον επισκέφθηκε ο Γεώργιος Τρίτος.
15. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά το ζεύγος Χαράλαμπος και Μιχαέλας Γεωργίου, και ο Αρχιμανδρίτης Χριστόδουλος Πετρόπουλος.
16. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Κομάνων Γαβριήλ, συνοδευόμενος από τους Πρωθιερείς John Marks και Αλέξανδρο Φωστηρόπουλο, (με τους οποίους παρέκάρησε σε Γεύμα), το δε απόγευμα ο Καρο Keheyan, και το ζεύγος Αργύρη και Νέδης Χατζηβασιλείου.
17. Το πρωί προήδρευσε συνεδρία της Εκπαιδευτικής Επιτροπής του Pan-Orthodox Assembly, με τους οποίους και παρέκάρησε σε Γεύμα. Το βράδυ τον επισκέφθηκε ο Κωνσταντίνος Παπόγλου, τέλεσε δε Τρισάγιο στο Παρεκκλήσιο της Αρχιεπισκοπής για την

Γαλάτεια Καλογόρου.

18. Το πρωί, τον επισκέφθηκε ο Κωνσταντίνος Σεβέρης. Το βράδυ, τέλεσε Μέγαν Εσπερινό στον Ιερό Ναό των Αγίων Αντωνίου και Ιωάννου Βαπτιστή, Holloway, οπότε και ανέπνευσε το εκκλησιαστικό σφρίκιο του Οικονόμου στον π. Θωμά Αρτέμη. Ανέπνευσε επίσης διπλώματα στους σπουδαστές εικονογραφίας της Σχολής Αράχνης και Αγίου Αντωνίου. Αργότερα τέλεσε τα εγκαίνια Έκθεσης Φωτογραφιών στο «Κοινοτικό Κέντρο» στο Palmers Green Βορείου Λονδίνου για το τουρκοκρατούμενο χωριό Ακανθού Κύπρου. Το δε βράδυ παρέστη στην Κοινωνική Εκδήλωση του Ελληνικού Ιατρικού Συνδέσμου, στο Ελληνικό Κέντρο Λονδίνου.
19. Το πρωί, τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό Αγίου Νικολάου, Southampton, και την Επιμνημόσυνη Δέηση για το 40ήμερο από τον θάνατο της Μαρίκας Γρηγόρη Χατζηκυριάκου (ανεψιού του Αρχιεπισκόπου), επισκέφθηκε δε στη συνέχεια το Κοιμητήριο, όπου ανέπνευσε προσευχές στον τάφο της. Ακολούθως παρέκάρησε σε Γεύμα σε εστιατόριο της πόλης.
20. Το απόγευμα, τον επισκέφθηκε η Λοξάνδρα Κυριακίδου. Το βράδυ προήδρευσε συνεδρία των Κηδεμόνων του Εκπαιδευτικού Trust του Αγίου Νικολάου.
21. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο π. Δημήτριος Κοντελίδης, και ο Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Ιωσήφ Παλιούρας συνοδευόμενος από την Μαρία Μπριάνα. Το βράδυ παρέστη σε εκδήλωση των Αποφοίτων του Παγκυπρίου Γυμνασίου Λευκωσίας Κύπρου, στο οίκημα της Κυπριακής Αδελφότητας Λονδίνου.
22. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο π. Ανδρέας Πίπτας, και ο Ιον Damalan συνοδευόμενος από την πρεσβυτέρα του. Το βράδυ προήδρευσε συνεδρία της Διοικούσης Επιτροπής του Ελληνικού Ορθόδοξου Δημοτικού Ομολογιακού Σχολείου Άγιος Κυπριανός, Croydon Λονδίνου.
23. Το απόγευμα, τον επισκέφθηκαν οι Λάκης Πιερέτης και Γεώργιος Richards, εκπρόσωποι της Εκκλησιαστικής Επιτροπής της Κοινότητας Τριών Ιεραρχών Leeds, συνοδευόμενοι από τον Ιερέα της Κοινότητας π. Σαμουήλ Κουσογιάνη. Το βράδυ προήδρευσε συνεδρία της επιτροπής για την ίδρυση Ορθόδοξου Ομολογιακού Σχολείου Μέσης Εκπαίδευσης στο Βόρειο Λονδίνο.
24. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά ο δημοσιογράφος Λάμης Τσιριγβάκης, οι Irigo Woolfe και Ιωάννης Παρέας, και ο Αρχιμανδρίτης Θεωνάς Μπακάλης.
25. Τον επισκέφθηκε, το απόγευμα, ο Διαμαντής Κουρίδης. Το βράδυ ευλόγησε τα εγκαίνια της Έκθεσης Κυπριακού Κρασιού και Επιχειρήσεων 2011 στη Μεγάλη Αίθουσα του Alexandra Palace Βορείου Λονδίνου.
26. Τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό Αγίας Αικατερίνης Barnet, οπότε χειροτόνησε σε Διάκονο τον Άγιο Gregory Wellington, παρέκάρησε δε στη συνέχεια σε Γεύμα που παρέθεσε η Κοινότητα. Το βράδυ τέλεσε την βάπτισμα του Σωτήρη, γιού των Eliot Ashurst και Michelle Παυλέγκερν στο Παρεκκλήσιο της Αρχιεπισκοπής. Στη συνέχεια παρέκάρησε σε Δείπνο με τον Καθηγητή Κωνσταντίνου Σβολόπουλο και την σύζυγό του, Αικατερίνη, σε εστιατόριο κοντά στην Αρχιεπισκοπή.
27. Τον επισκέφθηκαν διαδοχικά η Ελένη Ξανθοπούλου, ο Ευθύμιος Παντζόπουλος, ο Δημήτρης Αργύρης, η Μαρία Βαγενά, οι ιερείς του Ναού Αγίου Ιωάννη Βαπτιστή, Wightman Road, Hornsey, και τα μέλη της Επιτροπής Κηδεμόνων της Αρχιεπισκοπής (σε συνεδρία στην οποία προήδρευσε). Στο μεταξύ επισκέφθηκε την νοσηλεύσιμη στο Νοσοκομείο University College, Δάφνη Ηλιάδου.
28. Τέλεσε, το πρωί, την Νεκρώσιμη Ακολουθία για την Αγγελική Νικόλα, στον Ιερό Καθεδρικό Ναό Γενεσίου της Θεοτόκου, Camberwell Νοτίου Λονδίνου. Το μεσημέρι τον επισκέφθηκε ο π. Απόστολος Αλμαλιώτης. Το βράδυ παρέστη σε Δεξίωση που οργάνωσε ο Αποστολικός Nuncio στον Αρχιεπισκοπικό Οίκο του Westminster για τον Πάπα Βενέδικτο XVI και τα εξηντάχρονα της ιερωσύνης αυτού.
29. Το πρωί, τέλεσε την Θεία Λειτουργία στον Ιερό Ναό των Αγίων Δώδεκα Αποστόλων, Hertfordshire, οπότε χειροτόνησε σε Διάκονο τον Χαράλαμπο Γεωργίου, μετονομάσας αυτόν σε Πέτρο, παρέκάρησε δε στη συνέχεια σε Γεύμα που παρέθεσε η Κοινότητα.
30. Το πρωί παρέστη του Πανορθόδοξου Συλλειτουργού στον εορτάζοντα Ιερό Ναό των Αγίων Δώδεκα Αποστόλων, Hertfordshire, όπου και παρέκάρησε σε Γεύμα. Στη συνέχεια προήδρευσε συνεδρία της Επιτροπής Ορθόδοξων Επισκόπων των Βρετανικών Νήσων.

ENCYCLICAL FROM ARCHBISHOP GREGORIOS TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE SACRED ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA AND GREAT BRITAIN ON THE OCCASION OF THE JOYFUL PERIOD OF THE DORMITION FAST

Dear! Beloved in the Lord,

"In distress I have you as my haven, and in sorrows you are my joy and gladness; and in all illness, you have been my quick help, and rescuer in perils, and in all temptations my guardian and protectress".

During the month of August, according to our tradition, the Orthodox Church every evening sings the solemn Supplicatory Canons to the Most-holy Mother of our God. And so again this year we shall be chanting those wonderful and inspired songs which were composed by enlightened hymnographers many centuries ago, and which countless Orthodox Christians have ever since sung time and again in honour of Christ's Mother, thus proclaiming the holy teachings of the Church and its faith in her. These services are held during the first days of August as a sacred offering of the Faithful to Christ's Most-holy Mother, who took in her loving arms the Saviour of the human race, Christ the God-man. The hymns were written and are chanted during the first fifteen days of August leading to the celebration of the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, her departure from this world and ascent into heaven to remain forever with her only son Jesus Christ. Just as every person who comes into the world dies and 'returns to the earth whence he came', so too the Mother of God experienced the sting of death, and this is precisely what we celebrate as a landmark in the history of the life of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, of which Christ is the Head. Christ Himself experienced the sting of death in order to fulfil His universal mission for the salvation of the human race and to restore us to Paradise.

It is no coincidence that we Orthodox Christians, who are Christians of the Resurrection, should celebrate with splendour and gladness the Dormition of the Mother of God. We consider this feast a 'Summer Pascha'. It is also no coincidence that Orthodox Christians for fourteen days sing every evening in church and at home the Small and Great Supplicatory Canons to the Mother of God; and together with the authors of those hymns, we say: "The passions torment with their assaults, despondency's burden presses heavily on my soul, with the calm of your Son and God, pure Maiden, O All-immaculate Virgin, now give me peace".

The 'praying Church', the 'Church militant', can not but be moved in the face of pain and death, before the many trials and adversities of life – illness, war, captivity, and all those sorrows which afflict society on a daily basis. The hymns of the Supplicatory Canons are full of humanity, they offer comfort and encouragement to those who are afflicted and anxious for the many concerns of human life. They engender in our hearts a blessed hope and the spirit of peace, the sense of God's kindness which should govern our private and public lives. The word 'supplication' holds a sense of the spiritual, heavenly and angelic world, reminding us of our mystical relationship with God, of the love and light which is enriched by the joy and communion of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit alleviates our pain, rekindles lost hopes, drives out the fear of death, and raises the soul to heaven; it disperses hatred and the sinful passions which nest within us. As St Paul says, "The Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (Rom. 8:26) for our solace, our spiritual peace, and our salvation.

Let us therefore flock to our churches to conjoin our prayers with those of the Mother of God and all the Faithful of the world. Let us kneel devoutly before the icon of the Virgin Mary and ask for her intercessions for our families, our friends and our enemies, for the rulers of Greece, Cyprus, Great Britain, and all the world, in whose hands lies the progress of their peoples. Let us not forget that faith in God and prayer are weapons of victory in our struggle for peace and the good of all the world. Let us entrust ourselves again to the providence of God glorified in Trinity, and let us radiantly celebrate the Dormition of the Mother of God, singing with the hymnist: "Mother of the One who redeemed us all, hear the supplications your unworthy household makes, be our intercessor with him, the One born from you, the world's true Sovereign Lady, become our Advocate".

At the intercessions, Lord, of your Most-holy Mother, have mercy and save your world, for you are good and merciful, and you love mankind. Amen.

London, August 2011

Gregorios of Thyateira
**Gregorios, Archbishop of
Thyateira & Great Britain.**

THE THIRD MEETING OF THE PAN-ORTHODOX ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS WITH CHURCHES IN THE BRITISH ISLES

The Third Meeting of the Pan-Orthodox Assembly of Bishops with Churches in the British Isles was held on 30th June at the Church of the Twelve Apostles, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. Before the meeting, the bishops concelebrated at the Divine Liturgy on the occasion of the host Community's Feast Day.

The following bishops were present:

- His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira & Great Britain (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople)
- His Eminence Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh (Patriarchate of Moscow)
- The Most Revd Archbishop Iossif of Western & Southern Europe (Patriarchate of Romania)
- The Most Revd Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany & Great Britain (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia)
- The Most Revd Archbishop Anatoly of Kerch (Diocese of Sourozh)
- The Rt Revd Bishop Athanasios of Tropaeou (Archdiocese of Thyateira)

The Most Revd Metropolitan John of Western and Central Europe (Patriarchate of Antioch) The Rt Revd Bishop Dositej of Great Britain & Scandinavia (Patriarchate of Serbia), the Rt Revd Bishop Zenon of Dmanisi and Great Britain (Patriarchate of Georgia), the Most Revd Metropolitan Simeon of Central and Western Europe (Patriarchate of Bulgaria) the Rt Revd Bishop Ioan of Parnassos (Ecumenical Patriarchate's Ukrainian Orthodox Diocese in Great Britain) The Most Revd Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia (Archdiocese of Thyateira) and the Rt Revd Bishop Chrysostomos of Kyanea (Archdiocese of Thyateira) were unable to attend.

Also present at the Meeting were:

- The Revd Protopresbyter Samir Gholam (representing Metropolitan John of Western and Central Europe)
- The Revd Dragan Lazic (representing Bishop Dositej of Great Britain

and Scandinavia)

- The Very Revd Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassiliou (Secretary)

The Meeting of the Bishops took place following a festal meal provided by the host Community.

The Bishops discussed:

- a) The various practices amongst the dioceses regarding preparation for Communion and the rules regarding mixed marriages, and the possibility of an agreed position on these matters.
- b) Catechetical materials and the training of clergy and catechists.
- c) Canonical issues regarding the transfer and visits of clergy from one diocese to another.
- d) The prospect of a Pan-Orthodox Conference.

The Episcopal Assembly decided that:

- 1) The Pastoral Committee of the Assembly (chaired by Archbishop Elisey) should prepare pastoral recommendations regarding a) the preparation of Holy Communion, b) mixed marriages, and c) the transfer of clergy from one diocese to another.
- 2) The Educational Committee of the Assembly (chaired by Archbishop Gregorios) should examine existing leaflets and pamphlets on the Orthodox Church, its Faith and Sacraments, for the consideration of the Episcopal Assembly.

The next Episcopal Meeting will be held on 24th November 2011 at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God and All Saints, London.

London, 1st July 2011

*From the Secretariat of the
Pan-Orthodox Assembly of Bishops*

SERMON BY ARCHBISHOP GREGORIOS AT THE PAN-ORTHODOX LITURGY

Church of 12 Apostles, Hertfordshire, 30th June 2011



believe "in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church". At every Divine Liturgy we make this declaration of faith. Since today is the Feast Day of the Twelve Apostles, I would like to focus

first on what it means to be the 'apostolic' Church. Above all, this means that the Orthodox Church has its roots in the Faith of the Apostles, who transmitted the message of our salvation in Christ, first uttered laconically by St Peter, that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God", to which our Lord replies: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter (the rock), and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it". (Matt. 16:16-18)

It is important that we remember our Lord's promise, that even the gates of Hell will not prevail against Christ's Church. Too many of us do not truly believe in such a Church. Nowhere is this more evident than in the schisms that exist within the Orthodox world. At the first sign of trouble or at the slightest disagreement, some Orthodox and many other Christians are willing to create their own factions. Such divisions and dissensions are nothing new. They have, unfortunately, been a feature of Christian life since the time of the Apostles, as anyone who reads the Epistles of St Paul will quickly discover. St Ignatius of Antioch, at the beginning of the 2nd century, writes: "Avoid divisions as the beginning of evils". (Epistle to the Smyrneans) "Love unity; flee divisions". (Epistle to the Philadelphians) St Basil, in his Liturgy, prays, "Put an end to schisms in the Churches". But in spite of all of these problems, the Church survives and flourishes, and will abide forever.

Secondly, to be the Apostolic Church means to be the Church of Jesus Christ. As our Lord said to the Twelve, "Whoever accepts you accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the Father who sent

me". (Matt.10: 40) We know too that the Apostles ordained bishops, priests and deacons to continue their work. These are the successors of the Apostles. They continue the work of the Apostles to this very day. The Church is Apostolic because of the apostolic succession of its bishops, and because of the never-changing apostolic preaching of the Incarnation, Cross, Death, Burial and glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But to be the Apostolic Church means something more. The Gospel Reading for today's Feast describes the sending out, the 'apostoli', of the Twelve Apostles to preach the Good News that is the coming of the Only-begotten Son and Word of God and His Kingdom. (Matt.10: 5-16) The Church is therefore something that is 'sent out' into the world. We Christians are not to remain behind closed doors, celebrating our own private customs and rituals. We are called to proclaim the good news that Christ has risen from the dead, that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. Christ said this to His Apostles: "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world". (John 15-19) If we Christians are to bear effective witness to Christ, we must remember that we are called to point beyond this world, to guide people to the Kingdom of Heaven. This means that the Church has a never-ending mission, which is not static but dynamic, and is continuously being made new in order to be understood and received by people of every age.

The Orthodox Church today is closer to the age of the Apostles than recent generations. We live in a society which is no longer shaped by the Church. Her influence on society has dwindled, and her teachings are not so well known. There is widespread ignorance about Christianity in society. Christianity is persistently on the defensive against secularism, atheism, agnosticism and humanitarianism, the proponents of which often claim that there is no need for religion, that people can live without God. What place, then,

is there for the Church in modern society? I think one of the greatest challenges we face is confronting the temptations of contemporary society and providing an effective witness in an ever-changing world.

We also proclaim that our Church is 'Catholic', which means on the one hand 'universal' or 'world-wide', and on the other, 'complete'. It is complete because it is the Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit fills it and guides it into all truth. As the hymnographer of Pentecost writes: "The Holy Spirit binds together and guides the Institution of the Church". It is universal because it is for all times, all places, and all people, regardless of language and culture. It is not just for Greeks, Arabs, Eastern Europeans, and the rest, but for everyone. The Orthodox Church is comprised of ethnic groups, but it is beyond ethnicity. It is universal - it embraces all people, irrespective of race, language, culture and national boundaries. In the Book of Revelation, St John writes: "You were slain and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made them to be a Kingdom and priests serving our God, and they shall reign upon the earth". (Rev. 5: 9-10) Our Liturgy, our con-celebration as Bishops from various Orthodox Churches today, reveals the 'catholicity', the 'universality' of our Church. It is a great joy to concelebrate with brothers and bishops of other Orthodox traditions and jurisdictions. We are thus reminded that we united, that we make up the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We are part of the same heavenly Kingdom, we share the same Faith, we are members of one body, and so we all share together in the Common Cup that is the Body and Blood of Christ.

This means that we must strive to work together to overcome our prejudices, our nationalism and our exclusiveness, in order that we may truly proclaim the letter and spirit of Orthodoxy in this hospitable country. This proclamation of faith we must make not only for the benefit of our own congregations, but for that of the wider society. But we must also remember that we live in a country that is by tradition Christian, and we should not be proponents of an aggressive proselytism. We should work together with the other Christians of this country, despite the fact we are not in Eucharistic Communion with them.

The Church is Holy. Not because of our own virtue, but because Christ is the head of the Church and we are members of His body, which has been made holy and is continually being made holy by divine adoption and by His Sacrifice on the Cross. As St Paul writes,

"Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify her, having purified her with the washing of water with a word, that he might present the Church to himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle or anything similar, but that she might be holy and unblemished". (Ephesians 5: 25-27)

And finally, the Church is one. There is only one Christ, and He has one body. The various Orthodox Churches, Greek, Russian, Serbian, Antiochian, Romanian, Georgian, Bulgarian, English, and the rest, are one Church. But all too often, this doctrine of the Church is not taken seriously enough by us Orthodox. We think of ourselves as a federation of churches rather than as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We applaud Christian unity from a distance, not really wishing to know our brothers and sisters in Christ, not really wishing to have a closer relationship or co-operation with them. We tend to prefer division to unity, discord to harmony, and we would rather reduce our Church to a specific group of people, to a particular ethnicity, to people we feel more comfortable and familiar with. This is, I think, a great temptation, if not a sin, from which none of us are exempt. We Orthodox must free ourselves from our complexes and be more open, we must kindle true brotherhood and have dialogue with one another.

We are called to become what we are. We are called to be one. As our Lord said to the Father on behalf of the Apostles: "I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one - as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me". (John 17: 21)

Let us note that very important point: "May they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me". We cannot be credible witnesses of Christianity if we are divided amongst ourselves, if we do not foster a deeper unity, brotherhood, and co-operation amongst ourselves, particularly those of us who live in these blessed lands.

The answer to the challenge to truly be 'One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic' is humility and divine love. Only when we have humility and love between us will we find unity, holiness, concern for all people, and the power of the apostolic teaching which transformed the world forever. Let us therefore learn to love one another, "that with one mind we may confess: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Trinity Consubstantial and undivided". Amen.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassiliou

In the account of our Lord's Transfiguration, we can pinpoint three fundamental truths about the Christian Faith. The first is the harmony that exists between the Old and New Testaments. Christ stands before the two great prophets and witnesses of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah. 'By the testimony of two or three witnesses must the matter be established' [Deut. 19:15]. I referred to Moses and Elijah as witnesses. Witnesses of what? Witnesses of God the Word, Jesus Christ. All manifestations of the deity in the Old Testament are not of God the Father, whom no one has seen but the Son (cf. John 1:18), but of the Word of God. It was He Whom Moses saw and spoke with on Mount Sinai. It was He with Whom Elijah conversed on Mount Horeb. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is that same God and Word of the Old Testament, now conversing with the prophets on Mount Tabor, now made manifest in the flesh and living as a human being among us.

The second truth which the Transfiguration teaches us is that Christ's divinity and humanity are inseparable. The light with which Christ is transfigured is a light with which His flesh is transfigured. Having become man, He is not revealed sometimes as man and sometimes as God, but always as the two at once. He is no less human in the Transfiguration and no less divine in the Crucifixion. It is through the flesh of divinity that our salvation is made possible. This salvation means our own transfiguration. Christ was transfigured not only to show us what He is, but also to

show us what we will become. The Transfiguration of Christ points us to the glory of the Resurrection – a resurrection not only of the soul, but also of the body – and gives us a glimpse into that eternal and heavenly city which 'has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light and the Lamb is its lamp' [Rev. 21:23].

The third truth, which follows from the second, is that the human body is not an enemy or a prison of the soul, but an agent. There can be no such thing as spiritual life without the body. Treating spirituality and the material world as two separate things flies in the face of everything that Christ has done for us. Do we not eat His Flesh and drink His Blood at the Eucharist? When we think of spirituality, perhaps the last thing that comes to mind is the act of eating and drinking. But what can be more spiritual than this when we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ? In other words, the Transfiguration teaches us that the body is sacred, and we must treat it as such. It is for this reason that, on the Feast Day of the Transfiguration, we offer the first fruits to God so that they may be blessed, and so that those who partake of them and offer them may attain joy and forgiveness. Just as these fruits grow and ripen under the rays of the summer sun, so may the spiritual fruits of faith and love increase and mature in us by the light of God's grace. By that same grace, may we all reach some degree of transfiguration in life, albeit a small and invisible transfiguration of the heart.

The Gospel According to Saint Matthew 17:1-9



At that time, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led him up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead."

The challenge of contemporary homosexual culture to the Orthodox Church.

By the Very Rev'd Protopresbyter Stephen J.F. Maxfield

Contemporary homosexual culture? How can we talk of such a thing? What do we mean? It is to these questions that we must turn at the beginning and then consider where the challenge to the Orthodox Church lies.

I am sufficiently old – the ‘wrong’ side of 60, to be able to remember quite well a time when, in Britain, men who committed homosexual acts were deemed to be criminals and were sent to prison. Homosexuality was considered to be a matter that was taboo and not discussed in society, certainly not polite society, even if one knew that it was something that existed – (unlike Queen Victoria, who, legend recounts, refused to sign the Act of Parliament that outlawed homosexual acts between women because she refused to believe that they could exist). Yet in less than fifty years we find ourselves in a situation where homosexuality is considered to be a normal “life choice”, where teachers may be severely censured if they do not teach it in this way, where sex therapists must teach men how to have sex together and where hotels must make rooms with double beds available to a couple of men.

It is a fact worth mentioning, that the word “homosexual” is relatively new. It was coined originally by a German psychiatrist at the very end of the 19th century to describe people who commit sexual acts with people of their own sex: *Homo* being the Greek for ‘same’. In England, the word only started to be used in general speech after the First World War by such authors as George Bernard Shaw and Stella Gibbons in her humorous work *Cold Comfort Farm*.¹ Before this time, those who committed homosexual acts were referred to as “paederasts”. This word again derives from Greek roots (*paidos*: a child or boy and *erastes*: lover). And indeed in those days no distinction whatever was drawn between men who committed sexual acts with boys, and those who committed sexual acts with other men. It was assumed that anybody who did it with the one would certainly do it with the other. Not so today. There is now a definite and clear distinction drawn between “homosexual” and the new word “paedophile”. (This is another word with Greek origins but confusing: *Philos* is not sexual, but brotherly love, quite a different thing altogether to what paedophile describes: the corruption and sexual abuse of children.) Contemporary homosexuals or “Gays” would be appalled at being generally

thought of as ‘Paedophiles’.

Again as an example of how things have changed, one needs to look back only forty years to a time when very few people who had homosexual inclinations would allow anybody other than their closest friends to know it. It was a secret; and they did not desire the consequences of being “outed”:- exposed for their sexual tastes. Yet now, many homosexuals are quite open about these tastes and one is considered exceedingly old fashioned if one is not prepared to accept that one’s Member of Parliament, for instance, could be a homosexual.

However all this is not exclusive to homosexuality. We are living through a time that has been described as a “sexual revolution” and indeed in Western cultures this can hardly be denied for two fundamental reasons. The first is the availability of effective contraceptives which allow women to engage in sexual intercourse without any fear of becoming pregnant and the second is that in many countries, even if contraceptives are not available, abortion is freely available and women or couples may resort to safe abortionists to destroy their babies. Exactly as was predicted when these methods of birth control were under discussion, the result has been a culture of ‘safe’ promiscuity. The word ‘safe’ is in inverted commas because while the results may have been safe from a physical point of view, they may well have had mental and spiritual results that have been very dangerous indeed. For instance sexual activity may bring strong feelings of guilt, yet curiously this sense of guilt, of knowing one is doing wrong can bring about a rush of adrenalin that is itself fulfilling. Committing the sin brings the desire to repeat it!

But alongside this revolution there has been another one in Western cultures. Couples have become married at a later and later age thus prolonging the time that young, sexually active people spend before entering culturally acceptable relationships, be they marriage or cohabitation. It is worth remembering that in the middle ages girls were frequently married when they were twelve and in some countries, such as Wales, men were considered as having come of age when they were fourteen. In former times the delay between asexual childhood and sexual activity was very short indeed². The issue here is an idea that because you can have sexual relations, safely, therefore you

ought to have them. Indeed not to do so is in some way strange and unnatural. The idea that actually abstaining from sex is quite natural and normal and indeed does no one any harm is reviled and resisted by those who promote the sexual revolution.

The issue of "Orientation".

During the 1950s and 1960s four scientific reports were published on human sexuality following research in the United States of America *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953)³, by Dr. Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy and others and published by Saunders. *Human Sexual Response* (1960) and *Human Sexual Inadequacy* (1970), by William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson. These not only told us a great deal more about the sexual activities of men and women but they also presented them in a way that claimed to be scientific and therefore "true". Subsequently the methodology of the experiments behind these reports has been challenged and much of the detail is now considered unsound but many of the broad ideas have been accepted by the general population, though there is not the same acceptance from the sociological, psychological and gynaecological disciplines from which they originated. One of the most important concepts that are now widely accepted is that of "Orientation". The point here is that the sexuality of a given man or woman's sexuality is conditioned by factors, often considered beyond their control, which determines them to a particular kind of sexual activity, heterosexual (meaning sexual activity with the opposite sex), homosexual or bisexual (meaning that the person will indulge in sexual activities with any sex, their own or the opposite). Exactly when this "orientation" will be determined depends on the authority. Some suggest that it is genetic, determined in the home or determined as a matter of choice or even as a result of abuse.

It is important to point out however that with the scientific community this concept of "orientation" is by no means fully understood, nor indeed accepted. It has been suggested for instance that "orientation" may change during a person's life⁴. So, for instance, the American Psychological Association in their Encyclopaedia of Psychology state:-

"Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation – heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality – is determined by any particular factor or factors. The evaluation of amici is that, although some of this research may be promising in facilitating greater understanding of the development of sexual orientation, it does not permit a conclusion based in sound sci-

*ence at the present time as to the cause or causes of sexual orientation, whether homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. (Vol 7, p 260)*⁵ And further "Currently [as of "September 26, 2007"], there is no scientific consensus about the specific factors that cause an individual to become heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual — including possible biological, psychological, or social effects of the parents' sexual orientation".

This could be significant, as we shall see when we consider the response that the Orthodox Church makes to these issues and it is to this response that we must now turn.

At the outset we need to state some basic Orthodox teachings about humanity and sexuality.

First we must state that it is our understanding that humans were created by God, (*according to our image and likeness.. Genesis 1:26*), and are thus composite beings composed both of the physical and the spiritual. That their creation was good and that they were given the power to reproduce and thus assist in the creation of further human beings (*Increase and multiply... Genesis 1:28*) and that this power also was good. (*Genesis 1:26-31*)⁶ Note however, that it is NOT Orthodox Christian teaching that every human being is individually created by God⁷, even if they are known to Him from their conception. (This latter teaching is important for our subject because a person may not say that his "orientation" is *God given* and may or should thus be indulged).

Second we understand that humans are created in two complimentary kinds, men and women and it is God's intention that they should function normally as sexual beings who give increase and as guardians of the rest of His physical creation⁸.

Third we must state that as a result of the Fall, mankind is marred and sinful. **All** are sinful and **all** may commit **all** sins without exception. It is not Orthodox Christian teaching that there is elite of special people who are predestined to be different from the rest and thus will not sin as others. The sole exception to this rule is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who unites in His person both the perfect human and the perfect God and is without sin.

Finally we must state that the Orthodox Christian understanding of sexuality is quite simple. Sexual acts may take place between man and woman who are joined in the mystery or sacrament of marriage in which condition they are blessed not only with children but also with the comfort of each other. All other sexual acts come under the censure of fornication. BUT this is a very broad term indeed consisting of everything from the wet dream of a youth through to the activities of a professional prostitute. They are not all

considered in the same way, nor are they considered as having the same importance or significance. The driver for the issue here is to do with the reception of communion: under what circumstances is a person barred from communion and for how long, if at all?

From these principles we may draw certain conclusions. First of all, homosexual acts will be included under the general umbrella of fornication. And note that it is the **acts** that are the issue. A person may be tempted by all sorts of things but unless he commits them he does **not sin** and **should not** be condemned. A man may be inclined towards homosexual acts, just as another man is inclined towards over-indulgence in alcohol or anger, neither of them are sinners unless they commit the act. Theologically speaking the Church does not accept that a person is "a homosexual". And here there is a challenge for the Orthodox Church because the homosexual culture of today would very much like to re-define human beings not as men and women but with a qualifier: he is a "gay man" or she is a "straight woman". This fundamentally un-Christian labelling must be resisted.

However homosexual acts are not merely included with fornication. They are singled out for attention by the Church primarily based on teachings that we find in both the Old and the New Testaments. The first is the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Genesis 18:16-19:29*). This is of particular significance because the sin was deemed to be so extraordinary and unnatural that God (in the form of three angels) went to the city of Sodom to see for Himself whether the report was indeed true. And indeed, the people of Sodom left Him in no doubt for when the angels arrived at Sodom *"And the men of the city, the Sodomites, from young man to elder, all the people together, encircled the dwelling and they were summoning Lot and were saying to him. 'Where are the men who came in to you tonight? Bring them out to us in order that we may have relations with them.'"* (*Genesis 19:4-5*). The Law, as given in the book of Leviticus is clear. Sodomy is a sin.⁹ In the New Testament we find teaching on the subject by St Paul, particularly his first letter to the Corinthians *"You know perfectly well that people who do wrong will not inherit the kingdom of God: people of immoral lives, idolaters, adulterers, catamites, sodomites, thieves, usurers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers..."* (1 Corinthians 6:9¹⁰). In St Paul's time Corinth was dominated by the Acropolis on which stood a huge temple to Aphrodite, housing, it is said up to 2,000 temple prostitutes. It is significant therefore that this teaching was written to the Corinthians for whom sexual licence must have been an ever present reality. However this sexual licence was not confined to Corinth

of course. Throughout the Roman Empire until the hegemony of the Orthodox Church homosexual lifestyles were almost the norm. The Emperors Hadrian was famous for his male lover as was the bizarre Emperor Elagabalus (218-222) who it is said had his lover proclaimed as the "Emperor's Husband". It should be remembered that Christian ethics were forged in marked distinction and opposition to the norms of the day.

We continue to find teaching against homosexual acts from the time of the New Testament on, for instance in the letter of St Barnabas chapter 10 (late 1st early 2nd century) *"... by which he means you are not to debauch young boys, or become like those who do...etc."*¹¹ In fact many church fathers condemned homosexuality notably St John Chrysostom (late 4th century).

Not surprisingly it is in the Church Canons that the matter is most clearly dealt with. The issue principally is that of the sin of sodomy for which a penance of 15 years was imposed by St Basil Canons 7 and 62 (4th century). St Gregory of Nyssa (4th century) imposed a penance of 18 years. It would seem that these fathers derive their teaching from Canon 16 of the Council of Ancyra (314). However a sodomite was also barred from ordination (canon 18 of John the Faster (ca 580) and a boy who had been defiled was likewise barred (canon 19). It is probable that the Faster is making explicit an issue that is covered by canon 17 of the Council of Ancyra. (A canon, which in the form we now have it is rather opaque). It is not clear whether this ban on ordination was to do with some ontological change that takes place in the victim – a change in "orientation" perhaps? Or whether it demonstrates the wisdom of the Church whose experience was, and sadly still is, that one who has been abused as a boy may well go on to abuse others and is therefore a risk to the integrity of the priesthood in particular and the Church in general.

The challenge today.

The Church is now faced with a situation in the West that it has not encountered for some 1,500 years or more – a culture that is accepting of and may promote homosexual acts. But more than this it is a culture which without much searching is awash with sex, from internet porn sites and extra-marital dating agencies catering for every taste to all manner of marketing ploys aimed at selling one product or another even down to lingerie for little girls who cannot possibly have a real use for such things for at least five years.

When it comes to homosexuality there are several approaches: for the general population it is often accepted as a matter of taste – "I do not want to do that, but what he or she wants to do is nothing to do with me, good luck to them". For others, particularly in the

Christian Churches the response may be more subtle. "Well the ethical teaching of the Church was fixed a long time ago, we understand so much more about people now. The ethics must move with the times." Or even "Well they were made by God like that so it must be all right and they cannot avoid it." The revulsion felt by many towards homosexuality has been cleverly diverted into a loathing of paedophiles that are seen as entirely distinct from "gays and lesbians". Well perhaps they often are, but perhaps sometimes they are not.

How is the Orthodox Church to respond to this situation? I would like to make a number of suggestions.

First of all we need to stress the godly virtues of self-discipline and chastity. This is a fundamental pre-supposition for the Christian life from the day of Pentecost onwards. It is a major reason for fasting – which also involves restraint from sexual relations just as much as it involves abstaining from certain food and drink. We can do without sex as hundreds of thousands of monastics have demonstrated through the ages. However the Church has always recognised that sex is a very powerful passion, greater even than the desire to eat or drink, but it can be controlled. It is nevertheless God given and part of what it is to be a human being.

Second the whole notion of a fixed sexual "orientation" should be resisted. In strange circumstances all of us can do more or less anything! We change, and can change. The Christian is one who changes to the good, but a saint is one who has changed much.

Third the Church needs to recover her teachings about fantasy. One of the reasons that the Church disliked actors was that they lived in fantasy. The difficulty

now is that through the internet everyone may have access to the most extraordinary things – every kind of sexual depravity that one can imagine and a whole lot that one never imagined in one's wildest dreams. Because these things may be exciting to an individual who willingly or unwillingly finds them, does not mean that they are *de facto* depraved: though it would be an excellent thing if they resisted these things in the future!

Finally the Church will and always has encountered people who are strongly drawn to homosexual acts and commit them. They need help and love to encourage and assist them to change their lives to bring them back into proper balance. As do we all, for we are all sinners. Over and over again let spiritual fathers remember the great canon 102 Of the Quinisext Council (692):

*"For the whole account is between God and him to whom the pastoral rule has been delivered, to lead back the wandering sheep and to cure that which is wounded by the serpent: and that he may neither cast them down into the precipices of despair, nor loosen the bridle towards dissolution, or contempt of life; but in some way or other, either by means of astringency, or by greater softness and mild medicines to resist this sickness and exert himself for the healing of the ulcer, now examining the fruits of his repentance and wisely managing the man who is called to higher illumination...."*¹²

It is to this higher illumination that we are all called by the Orthodox Church, and just as all sin, so all are made alive in Christ: His life, the Life of God Himself, and to Him be the glory, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

¹ *Cold Comfort Farm* is a bucolic satire on the works of the author Mary Webb.

² King John of England married his second wife Isabella of Angoulême when she was 12, he was 33. Although it was said that they had intercourse with her from their marriage – his courtiers complained at how late into the morning they remained in bed, she did not actually conceive until she was 18. Likewise Mahomet is supposed to have had a wife aged 10. While one can now be very uncertain about any events of Mahomet's life, what is certain is that when the story came to be written in the 9th century, to take a wife so young was not considered odd.

³ Parts of the Kinsey Reports regarding diversity in sexual orientations are frequently used to support the common estimate of 10% for homosexuality in the general population. However, the findings are not absolute, and Kinsey himself avoided and disapproved of using terms like homosexual or heterosexual to describe individuals, asserting that sexuality is prone to change over time, and that sexual behavior can be understood both as physical contact as well as purely psychological phenomena (desire, sexual attraction, fantasy). Instead of three categories (heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual), a seven-category Kinsey Scale system was used.

⁴ And this would be my own pastoral experience. I know of at least two men who were in "stable" homosexual relationships for a many years yet are now happily married with contented wives.

⁵ See generally Am. Psychol. Ass'n, 7 *Encyclopedia of Psychol.* 260 (A.E. Kazdin ed., 2000); 2 Corsini [*The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences* . . . (W.E. Craighead & C.B. Nemeroff eds., 3d ed. 2001)] . . . at 683

⁶ Old Testament quotations are from the *New English Translation of Septuagint* (NETS)

⁷ This issue was dealt with particularly by St John of Damascus (c.657-749) and derived from a controversy with certain Moslems who did argue that everyone was individually created. St John argued that this teaching was immoral as it implied that God would bless, by the gift of children, a sinful act: rape. He thus argued that we are created as co-creators with God.

⁸ It may be argued that an extremely small number of human are born with uncertain gender. This is a complex topic well beyond the scope of this paper but the answer lies somewhere along the lines of the previous paragraph.

⁹ See also Leviticus 18:22: "and you shall not sleep with a male as in a bed of a woman, for it is an abomination - " also Leviticus 20:13, where it is required that they are put to death.

¹⁰ *Jerusalem Bible* translation.

¹¹ *Early Christian Writings* Penguin p. 206

¹² *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. XIV The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, p408

Sermon by Protopresbyter John Raffan at the Clergy Conference

Church of Ss. Cyril & Methodios, Mansfield 10th May 2011

Your Eminence, Your Graces, Dear Brothers and Co-Celebrants, Dear Friends in this most hospitable of Communités, and All who have come to the Patronal Feast of this Church!

Our Church is constantly inviting us to celebrate the great and wonderful mysteries of divine grace, things which by their very magnitude surpass our comprehension and which are easily crowded out of our field of perception and awareness by the multitude of our daily cares and preoccupations. They are things that, since they support and bear our whole life and being, easily pass as unnoticed as the air we breathe.

Our service this evening is no different. In this Paschal period our attention is turned to the surpassing reality of the Resurrection and we are invited to experience its inexhaustible power to raise up, re-constitute and re-orient our lives in sharing in the joy, disbelief and astonishment of the myrrh-bearing women. The life that wells forth from the tomb of Christ as from a hidden, unapproachable and Life-Giving spring calls on us to respond with wonder and thanksgiving, allowing the super-abundant grace of the Resurrection to invade, pervade and support our whole being so that we may rejoice in the 'sacred Pascha, the mystic Pascha, the Pascha that is Christ the Redeemer, the Pascha that has opened for us the gates of Paradise, the Pascha of delight, the Lord's Pascha, the Pascha that is ransom from sorrow'.

This evening, however, our Church also invites us to another feast, the Birthday party of the Queen of cities, Constantinople, which this year celebrates her 1,681st anniversary. The city of Constantinople has an importance so great and so all-pervasive for our experience of the Church that we very often fail to perceive it or take account of it. Indeed, every aspect of our faith and life in the Church is mediated through the tradition of this city. The notice in the Synaxarion for today states simply: On the 11th of this month we celebrate the Birthday or Inauguration of this God-protected and Queen of Cities, dedicated in a unique way to our Lady, the Holy Theotokos and forever saved by her. This alone is sufficient to remind us how much our devotion to the Theotokos is shaped by this city. Whether we are

singing the service of the Paraklisis or of the Akathistos, whether we are celebrating the feasts of the Veil of Protection or of the Life-Giving Spring, we are being brought back again and again to her City. Indeed, we cannot open our mouths to sing in the Church at all without paying indirect homage to this City with every breath and every inflexion of our voice: our musical tradition as well as our liturgy and liturgical order, all grew and matured here and from here were disseminated throughout the Church.

The writer of the note in the Synaxarion speaks naturally of 'this city', presupposing that we all live in this city, and in a sense, of course, we all do. Our dogmatic understandings and church discipline are all expressed not only through the decisions of the Church Councils held in or around the capital, but equally through the way in which these decisions were incorporated into the public law of the Empire, and these things all remain with us as a living reality, even now that the Empire is a thing of the past. Even those cherished aspects of Orthodoxy which have their origin elsewhere are mediated for us through Constantinople: we read the Desert Fathers through Paul Evergetinos, we sing the hymns of the Church in Jerusalem as integrated into the worship of the great Studite monasteries and of the Great Church, the tradition of Syrian hymnography as exemplified by the hymns of Saint Ephraim is made alive for us through the Kontakia of Romanos, the art and architecture of the Church with their manifold influences reach us through the prism of the Queen of Cities. The list of our debts to Constantinople is unending. The Saints we commemorate every day are primarily those contained in the Synaxarion of Constantinople. Today, for example, we commemorate among others Saint Mokios, a saint martyred in Byzantium in 295 and who had his Church in Constantinople which contained not only his own relics but also the relics of other Saints of the city, including perhaps most famously, his fellow unmercenary saint who had set up the largest free hospital in the Empire, Saint Sampson the Hospitable.

The Saints to whom this Church in Mansfield is dedicated, Cyril and Methodius, and whose feast we

also celebrate today, are once again intimately bound up with the history of Constantinople. They had been born sons of a high-ranking Imperial official in Thessalonica, but while still in their teens their father died and they were taken to Constantinople by their new guardian Theoktistos, who at that time was head of the Imperial Foreign Ministry, the Logothetis tou dromou. Here in the capital Cyril and Methodius studied with the great scholar and later Patriarch Photius, imbibing not only the encyclopedic learning of their teacher, but also immersing themselves in the culture and traditions of Constantinople. Cyril himself later taught as professor of philosophy at the newly founded University of Constantinople. In all their work as diplomats, as defenders of Orthodoxy, as missionaries, as teachers, as translators, as priests and as pastors, they carried with them and were carried by the city of Byzantium.

The culture that they transmitted in such a genial way to the Slavs had for centuries thereafter Byzantium as its fixed centre of reference. When the grandson of King Harold of England, Andrei Bogolubsky, Andrew the God-Loving, whose family had fled to Kiev after the Battle of Hastings in 1066, came to found the city of Vladimir and build the stunningly beautiful 'Pokrov' Church of the Protecting Veil in the north of Russia, he carried with him a miraculous icon of the Virgin from Constantinople and his inspiration was the vision of Andrew the Fool for Christ in the Church of the Theotokos at Vlachernae.

Our own position in this country as priests and as pastors, as ambassadors and defenders of Orthodoxy, as missionaries, as teachers and as translators in the widest sense, requires for us also be rooted and immersed in this same tradition, to strive to understand it and cultivate the shoot from the vine of Constantinople here in Britain, just as Saints Cyril and Methodius did in Slavonic lands. The Church teaches us that we receive most abundantly when we offer back in thanksgiving what we have been given: and to possess this precious tradition most surely we need to offer it to our flocks in as integral a manner as possible.

To be rooted in a tradition does not mean to belong to the past, to live in another fantastic place and time, to refuse to face the challenges of the present and to cut ourselves off from the society in which we live, nor does it mean that we cannot have a critical and creative relationship to that tradition, but it does mean that we always have an awareness that we are shaped and carried by forces that go far beyond ourselves, both in ways that we can

recognize and in ways that we cannot recognize, and that we are carried and guided in what we do by the Spirit that has always guided the Church, the Spirit that comes at Pentecost. It means that in trusting what we have received of this Spirit of Life of Truth, we trust also that the grace that makes up what is lacking, ἡ θεία χάρις τὰ ἐλλείποντα ἀναπληροῦσα, will provide whatever else is needed for the nurturing of our Church in Britain.

Moreover, our relationship with the Great Church is not a thing of the past but very much of the present. This is underlined for us by the fact that this year our Archbishop as a member of the Holy and Sacred Synod of Constantinople travels to Istanbul every month.

The Great Church has always been a source of unity, and its order and traditions are guarded as zealously in the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem as they are in Constantinople. It is also called to be a source of unity within our own parishes which are often multi-ethnic, within the Archdiocese and among all the Orthodox jurisdictions in this country which otherwise face increasing fragmentation.

When we stand firmly in the traditions of the Great Church we are not standing in an imaginary historical space, nor only in a present-day 'jurisdiction', rather we are standing above all under the protection of the Theotokos. As we heard, the Synaxarion speaks of the city dedicated in a unique way to our Lady, the Holy Theotokos and forever saved by her. Throughout Lent we read every day at the service of Matins:

Ἐν τῷ Ναῷ ἐστῶτες τῆς δόξης σου, ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐστάναι νομίζομεν, Θεοτόκε, πύλη ἐπουράνιε, ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν τὴν θύραν τοῦ ἐλέους σου.

Standing in the temple of your glory, we think we stand in heaven, O Theotokos. O gate of heaven, open to us the door of your mercy.

This is the surpassing reality that the Church invites us to experience with the feast of the Birthday of the Queen of Cities. This is the temple that we are called to help build in this country. And to this end we invoke today the prayers of Saints Cyril and Methodios. In the hymns we heard in our Vespers service the two Saints are described as 'Imitators of the Apostles' and we in turn seek to be imitators of Cyril and Methodios in all our own work in our various parishes. We congratulate today this Community which has a truly 'Apostolic' presence here in the Midlands of England and we pray that they may always be guided through the prayers of their patron saints.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

BRIDGING THE GULF BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND PASTORSHIP: Catechism and Administration

Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassiliou

Speech at the Clergy Conference 2011, Nottingham - Mansfield, 9th - 11th May

In his oration in defence of his flight to Pontus, St Gregory the Theologian describes pastoral ministry in the following way:

*"The scope of our art is to provide the soul with wings, to rescue it from the world and give it to God, and to watch over that which is in His image: if it abides, to take it by the hand; if it is in danger, to restore it; if ruined, to make Christ to dwell in the heart by the Spirit."*¹

St Gregory goes on to remind us that pastorship must be rooted in a theological understanding of ministry.

I began with reference to St Gregory the Theologian's comments on pastorship because I believe that there is today a chasm between theology and pastoral care. Sometimes people seem to speak of these two things as almost mutually exclusive. This is no doubt the reason His Eminence has asked me to speak on this topic.

There are two things His Eminence has asked me to touch upon in their relation to theology and pastorship: catechism and administration. And I will begin with catechism.

Theology and Pastorship in Catechism

Catechism and pastoral care share the same principle: that of meeting people where they are, coming down to their level, in order to then take them higher. Herein lies the challenge for theology in catechism. Theology is, on the whole, complicated, and a great deal of written theology out there seems to be written by theologians for theologians. A lot of the material that is written for the average layperson is too simplistic. Either we expect people to rise up to our level without a helping hand, or we come down to their level and leave them there.

Making theology approachable and palatable is not the same as leaving theology to one side. When people say that we should keep things simple, they too often imply that we should not bother with

complex subjects such as Trinity, Christology, ecclesiology, and so on. Or worse still, we oversimplify these subjects so much that we end up with heresies instead of Orthodox doctrines. But it is not the subjects themselves that are in need of simplification, it is our approach and the vocabulary we use. We too often assume that people know what we are talking about, and we expect them to be familiar with ecclesiastical and theological language. When instructing adults, we need to understand that we are not dealing with children, but we are often dealing with people who are simply not familiar with our vocabulary. The solution to this problem is not a complex one. If someone does not understand a sentence because it contains a couple of words he doesn't know, all he has to do is look them up in a dictionary. The result is that he now understands the sentence, while at the same time he has learned two new words. Likewise, making theology understandable does not mean we refuse to use any form of theological or ecclesiastical language - that we overlook subjects like Christology and patristics, and words like 'homoousios' or 'theanthropos'. Avoiding them simply means that the pupil's knowledge is no better now than it was when he started. And the next time he hears those words in church, as he inevitably will, he is none the wiser. When we use such terminology, and if we take catechism seriously we will inevitably have to, we should also stop to explain what exactly it is we are referring to.

Another point I would like to make about catechism, particularly in its connection with pastorship, is this: catechism is not just about informing people and teaching them things they didn't know. Some people claim that the catechist does not have to be a priest. Why not have trained lay theologians do catechism? In theory I agree that laypeople can do that job just as well and often better than we can. But there are two problems I see with a layperson instructing people in the faith.

The first is that, whether rightly or wrongly, a lot of people are not confident that what they are being taught by a layman, however well trained he or she is in Orthodox theology, is reliable. People still look to the priest, even the most uneducated, as more of an authority on Orthodoxy than a layperson. This is hardly surprising. As our Lord said, the sheep listen to the shepherd's voice. "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." (John 10:3-5)

The second problem with a layperson carrying out the role of the catechist is that there are many aspects of faith and theology which require a pastoral touch. This is also the reason that it is not adequate to simply give people literature to read without explanation and guidance. I recall a couple of simple catechetical books I read which touch upon complex and sensitive issues. In the attempt to make things as simple as possible, the material ended up grossly oversimplifying and therefore misrepresenting some traditional Orthodox views, and sounding very harsh and pastorally insensitive, completely disinterested in accounting for many questions a reader would inevitably have on such issues. Simply giving people books to read as a form of catechism is potentially damaging without a guide.

Catechism is not simply a study - it is a journey. The catechist's task is to lead people by the hand and to take them on a journey. And who better for the task than the pastor, the shepherd of the flock? In my own meagre experience, something which many people value just as much as the opportunity to learn about the faith, is the opportunity to develop a relationship with a priest, the opportunity to be able to ask questions and receive answers - questions not only on matters of belief and liturgical practice, but questions on personal issues.

Does a priest have to have theological training to do catechism? If we are going to prepare our own catechetical material, obviously we need to know theology. But there is catechetical material out there in various books and on the internet which every priest, provided he at least has sense enough to discern between good and bad sources,

can use and adjust as he deems fit. When dealing with questions and answers, again it is obviously better if we know our subject well, but I believe that clergy who are not theologically educated but who are gifted as pastors can be just as effective, if not more effective, in catechism than clergy who have received a formal theological education.

Another point I would like to make about catechism is that we often restrict it to non-Orthodox adults who wish to be received into the Orthodox Church. Sometimes what prompts this decision is the plan to marry an Orthodox partner. We should not refuse to catechise such people. In my experience, some begin catechism with the view that it is just another formality - one more box to be ticked in the list of things to do before your wedding - but often they become very enthusiastic about Orthodoxy during the catechism process, and often the Orthodox partner becomes keen to undergo instruction also. This brings me to another point: we must think also in terms of catechising and re-educating baptised Orthodox Christians. The sad reality is that the vast majority of Orthodox have had no instruction in the faith whatsoever. Furthermore, catechism does not always have to cover every aspect of the faith. There are many opportunities to provide guidance and instruction on specific matters, and I am thinking here predominantly of christenings and weddings. I believe we need to provide some guidance and instruction, even if it is for just one or two hours, for parents and godparents before christenings. I fail to see where the pastoral care lies in arranging endless baptisms week after week without any guidance whatsoever in regard to giving the child a Christian Orthodox upbringing, selecting a suitable godparent, naming the child, the meaning of the ceremony, etc. As far as marriages are concerned, I would like to point out that in some dioceses in America and Australia, it is not possible for a couple to get married without first going through an Orthodox marriage guidance seminar. Quite a few people have contacted our Archdiocese to ask if we have something similar. Unfortunately we do not. In light of the divorce statistics, it may be worth considering. But returning to baptism, I believe that instructing families and godparents before christenings is something we must begin doing as a matter of urgent priority. The infants we baptise are the future of our Church, and their parents and godparents are, for the most part, clueless about

Orthodoxy. And I think many would welcome some guidance and instruction in such cases. But in addition to the work of each priest and parish, it would be helpful if we had some guidance from the Archdiocese in this matter in the form of pamphlets on subjects such as baptism and marriage, so that we could all at least have some concise, simple literature that we could give to people when they come to see us.

Theology and Administration

If there seems to be a gulf between theology and pastorship, there is a far bigger one between theology and administration. Nowhere is this more evident than in the endless arguments about the running of the Church's affairs. So often we hear of quarrelling between clergy and lay leaders in the church, which inevitably leads to the question, 'who is in charge of the church? The priest or the chairman?' The answer is neither of them. The bishop is in charge. The representative of the bishop is the priest. The reason for this is clear: the person who is in charge is the one who presides at the liturgy, the one who serves at the altar and celebrates the Eucharist. And this is so because Christ is the head of the Church, and the centre of the Church's life is the Eucharist. As Archbishop Gregorios said in his introduction to last year's Clergy-Laity Conference: "What ever takes place in the Community should flow from the Holy Altar, where the Holy Gospel is kept as its very heart and on which the 'Holy Things for the holy' are offered to the faithful for the remission of sins and eternal life". This means two things. First of all, it means that the laypeople, including the committee and chairperson, are to look upon the priest as the bishop's representative, as though he is 'standing in' for the bishop. Secondly, it means that the priest's ministry is not his own, but the bishop's ministry which he carries out on his behalf. The priest, therefore, is not a bishop in his own parish. He cannot do as he pleases, but only what his bishop authorises him to do. All of this is made abundantly clear in 5 of the 7 epistles of St Ignatius of Antioch, which I believe remain of profound theological importance to ecclesiology. St Ignatius was concerned that the bishop should be the centre of Christian unity precisely because it is the

bishop who presides at the Eucharist. The Bishop is to preside in the place of Christ, and the presbyters and deacons are to preside in the place of the Apostles. But because we have forgotten all of this, we have ended up with a sharp divide between the priest and the lay leaders, between the liturgical and pastoral life of the church, and its administration, the former being governed by its own religious set of criteria, and the latter being governed by another, often secular, set of criteria. No wonder there is so often a conflict between clergy and committees. The heart of the church's administration must be the Holy Altar, the Eucharist, and that means that the leader of all of the Church's affairs, including its administration, is the one who presides at the altar, being the bishop or the priest who is ordained to do this on his behalf. It makes no theological sense for a layman to carry out the role of administrative leadership in the Church for the simple reason that he cannot celebrate the Eucharist, he cannot preside at the Divine Liturgy. And if the one who presides at the Liturgy is not in charge of all of the Church's affairs, then the Church is without a shepherd, without visible unity. I do not deny that, ever since St Ignatius, bishops have been milking his theology for all it's worth. What St Ignatius meant and what bishops would like to think he meant are not always one and the same thing. Nonetheless, I believe that his teachings on the episcopate are of paramount theological importance. If the person who has been entrusted with the care of the Church is not the person who presides at the holy altar, then the Eucharist, and therefore Christ, is not the heart of the Church's life.

My final point is this: all of these aspects of our ministry – catechism, pastoral care, administration – must not be kept in separate compartments. For the one is impoverished without the other. In isolation, all of these aspects of our priesthood are in danger of being distorted and alienated from the theology and spirit of the Church. All aspects of our ministry – theology, worship, catechism, pastorship, administration – have one and the same purpose: to lead people into the unity of the faith, and to guide them into the knowledge and love of God.

¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, 'Oration II: In Defence of his Flight to Pontus, and his Return, after his Ordination to the Priesthood, with an Exposition of the Character of the Priestly Office' in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace: Edinburgh/Grand Rapids: T&T Clark/Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 7:209.)

Beware of earthly treasure

Is capitalism a spiritual failure?

by Aaron Taylor

As a resident for two years of Greece, an ostensibly Orthodox Christian country, I grew accustomed to seeing graffiti which proclaimed, "Down with capitalism!", or some such thing. But concerning "capitalism" merely as a way of organising a country's economic system, Orthodox Christians can have rather little to say qua Orthodox Christians. There is no clear teaching either in the New Testament or in subsequent Orthodox tradition that government policy, businesses, the "marketplace", or – to use that loathsome word – "consumers" should have greater or lesser control over the flow of capital. Given the right circumstances, economies which lean toward any of these factors can either help or hinder Orthodox in living in accordance with Christianity. After all, contra Max Weber, an economic system cannot have a "spirit" in the theological sense.



It is true, however, that the free market, if treated as sacrosanct, can subtly or explicitly encourage attitudes which are inimical to Christian life. This is particularly true in our day of mega-corporations, advertising, and consumerism. Some ideology, no matter how tacit in expression or apparently objective in conception, must lie at the root of all economic policies or decisions. Even the most scientific of economists, if such a characterisation is not already somewhat misleading, must have some conception of "good" or at least "desirable" if he or she is to have any criteria for acting.

In this area, without in any way suggesting that right action can be deduced infallibly from the principles Orthodoxy offers, we at least have something to say. Human beings are made in the image of God, and to attain to his likeness, he desires first that we love him with all of our heart and strength and second that we love our neighbour as ourselves. This means that the chief good, and with it the essential nature of man, is non-material. We mustn't set our hearts on earthly treasure. It also

means that we must constantly go out from ourselves if we are to behave as moral creatures. The basic posture of the Christian is an altruistic one, centred on self-sacrifice. Christ says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ..." (Matthew 25:40). St Basil the Great says, "Resolve to treat the things in your possession as belonging to others".

It is surely clear that such an ethic is basically incompatible with any kind of ideological capitalism. A case can be, and sometimes is, made that people must be entirely unconstrained in order for their altruism to have any moral justification. This is a debatable point. What is not debatable is that this argument is typically only a way of dismissing objections to unrestrained capitalism in the economic sense. No one to my knowledge seriously justifies the free market on the grounds that it enables a morally efficacious altruism. We do not object to socialised medicine because we want so badly to build free hospitals out of our own pockets. This is seen most clearly in the philosophy of Ayn Rand, who speaks of "the virtue of selfishness".

Is ideological capitalism a spiritual failure? Not, perhaps, per se. But it seems dangerous from a truly Orthodox Christian perspective to regard economic capitalism as much more than the lesser of two, equally materialist, evils. As that perceptive critic of both Soviet and American society, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, saw so clearly, the explicit tyranny of communism at least had the virtue of highlighting in a rather stark way for those who suffered from it the essentially spiritual nature of man. Capitalism, by contrast, while it does us the favour of sparing our lives, tends to lull us into a kind of moral sleep. We begin to forget that "here have we no continuing city" (Hebrews 13:14). It is difficult to say which is, in the end, worse.

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SPEECH BY SUBDEACON CHARALAMBOS (PETROS) GEORGIU ON HIS ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

Church of the 12 Apostles, Hertfordshire,
Wednesday, 29th June 2011

"Your Eminence, reverend Fathers, my family and friends,

I do not think that the calling of Christ to ministry is ever and easy one to hear, much less to respond to. "Who will ascend into the Lord's mountain, or who will stand in his Holy Place?" (Psalm 23) It is certainly not a "job" to be taken lightly, for even as Saint Paul says in reference to the authority which he was bestowed "I fear lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve, so your thoughts should be corrupted from the simplicity which is towards Christ." (2 Corinthians)

When I was young, I attended a Roman Catholic Primary school, where, I learned some of the basics of our faith. However, during my secondary years, in my desperation to fit into my surroundings, being racist and markedly secular, I tried to cast off both my culture and my religion, thinking that by doing so I could achieve happiness and acceptance. However, acceptance didn't come and far from fulfilling me, the life that I had made for myself bore a void into my soul, as though my heart was bleeding. Which indeed it was. Having read about Father Seraphim Rose's

conversion years later, I can identify with this living hell, the infernal feeling that is brought about by man's separation from his master and maker.

And yet as I have said above, when God calls it is difficult to answer. In reacquainting myself with the Church of my Fathers, that is, our Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, I have rediscovered both our God and my culture and found, much to my surprise and delight, that one feeds into the other.

I cannot honestly say that I felt this call from my youth, though my sister used to joke to her friends about me that "Oh, he is going to become a priest when he grows up!"

In coming to this holy ministry, I thank God for all that he has done for me, for inasmuch as I am not worthy. I would also like to thank the following people:

First of all, I would like to thank all my friends, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, religious, secular or otherwise. All of our experiences, through good and bad situations have helped to bring me to this point. I would

like to thank the trustees of the church, k. Louis Loizou and k. Christakis Amerikanos, who have provided me with help and support during the past year and to thank them for bringing me into the church to work.

I would like to thank the chairmen, chairwomen, and all the committees both past and present, including the Βοηθητική Αδελφότητα; for all that they have done and continue to do day in and day out for the benefit of our community. I do not doubt that without their presence and dedication for the beauty of God's house, this community would be far poorer, spiritually and physically speaking, than it is today.

I would like to thank the chanters of the community, both past and present: Our Protosaltis Alexandros Procopiou and our former Lambadarios and my former teacher Panagiotis Stavrinides for their help and imparting their knowledge in order to help me since my arrival here. 8 years ago, k. Panagiotis took my brother and I under his wing, teaching us the τάξις of the services and who sent us to help out at the community in Milton Keynes. I would like to thank our former Neogoros Kostantinos Prodromou, for everything he has done for me, for his advice and his patience.

I would like to extend my thanks to our priests P. Nikodemos and P. Demetrianos, for their filial love and patience with me in the run up to this day. I would also like to extend my thanks to my first Father-Confessor, Father Philip Hall, who is unable to be with us today. In addition I would like to thank Father Chrysostomos and to Father-Deacon Modestos, who has been a great influence on

my life through the Scouting movement.

I would like to especially thank Father Joseph. There are so many reasons why I could thank Father, for taking me under his wing and being my teacher at the school of Byzantine music, for bringing me to the analogion, for his spiritual support, especially during my PGCE last year, for his daily advice which is always good but sometimes hard to take in. I thank you for all of this, and for much more.

At this point, I think it would be appropriate to thank my family. For all of the times that you drove me from Scouts, to Byzantine music, to Violin, to choirs and orchestras, when we have played, laughed and joked together, for our late night/early morning discussions, and for those times when you had to put up with my questions, my tantrums, my shenanigans; for coming to concerts, to operas, to a myriad of different things I have dragged you to and more; for your help in times of trouble, for your advice in times of trial and despair, and above all for the love that you continue to show for me, I thank you and love you all.

It has been said that behind every great man there is a great woman. I cannot claim to be a great man but, I believe that my wife is a truly great woman. Everything that I have said above applies to her, and more.

Finally, I would like to thank you, your Eminence, for accepting me to become a member the holy Diaconate in Christ. I would also like to thank you for your unfailing support for the young people of our Archdiocese."

ΕΙΔΗΣΕΙΣ - NEWS

ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΘΥΑΤΕΪΡΩΝ & Μ. ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ

Η Αγία και Ίερά Σύνοδος Μάρτιος - Αύγουστος 2011

Σημαντικό φωτογραφικό στιγμιότυπο παρελήφθη στην Ίερά Αρχιεπισκοπή Θυατείρων και Μεγάλης Βρετανίας, από Συνεδρία της Αγίας και Ίερας Συνόδου του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου, στις αρχές Ιουνίου του 2011.

Την Αγίαν και Ίεράν Σύνοδον του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου, προεδρευομένην υπό της Α.Θ. Παναγιότητος, του Οικουμενικού Πατριάρχου κυρίου κυρίου Βαρθολομαίου, αποτελούν οι κάτωθι Σεβ. Αρχιερείς (όπως διακρίνονται στην φωτογραφία):



Ο Οικουμενικός Πατριάρχης Βαρθολομαίος, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων και Μεγάλης Βρετανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Αιγυπτου και Αβυσσινίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Αμερικής, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Καναδάς, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Γαλλίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Γερμανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ιταλίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ισπανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Κίνας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Κροατίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Κύπρου, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Λατβίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Λιθουανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ουγγαρίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Πολωνίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ρουμανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σερβίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σλοβενίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σλοβακίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Τσεχίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Φινλανδίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σουηδίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Νορβηγίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Δανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Γερμανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ολλανδίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Βελγίου, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Γαλλίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ιταλίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ισπανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Κίνας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Κροατίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Κύπρου, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Λατβίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Λιθουανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ουγγαρίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Πολωνίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ρουμανίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σερβίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σλοβενίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σλοβακίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Τσεχίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Φινλανδίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σουηδίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Νορβηγίας, ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος Δανίας.

Εκινώντας δεξιά από τον Παναγιώτατο Πατριάρχη:

- Θυατείρων και Μ. Βρετανίας κ. Γρηγόριος (12.12.1970) - 1ος δεξιά,
- Τρανουπόλεως κ. Γερμανός (14.01.1973) - 2ος δεξιά,
- Ήμβρου και Τενέδου κ. Κύριλλος (27.10.1985) - 3ος δεξιά,
- Πριγκηποννήσων κ. Ίακωβος (25.12.1987) - 4ος δεξιά,
- Αγίου Φραγκίσκου κ. Γεράσιμος (09.02.2002) - 5ος δεξιά,
- Κορέας κ. Αμβρόσιος (05.02.2006) - 6ος δεξιά,

Εκινώντας αριστερά από τον Παναγιώτατο Πατριάρχη:

- Γέρον Χαλκηδόνης κ. Αθανάσιος (24.09.1972) - 1ος αριστερά (δεν έχει υπογράψει),
- Θεοδωρουπόλεως κ. Γερμανός (06.02.1972) - 2ος αριστερά,
- Καρπάθου και Κάσου κ. Αμβρόσιος (16.06.1983) - 3ος αριστερά,
- Περγάμου κ. Ιωάννης (22.06.1986) - 4ος αριστερά,
- Ικονίου κ. Θεόκλητος (10.09.2000) - 5ος αριστερά,
- Ρεθύμνης και Αιολοποτάμου κ. Ευγένιος (28.05.2005) - 6ος αριστερά,

Διακρίνονται επίσης ο προσφάτως χειροτονηθείς Σεβασμιώτατος Μητροπολίτης Προύσης κ. Ελπιδοφόρος (τελευταίος αριστερά από τον Πατριάρχη) και ο νέος Υπογραμματέας Πανοσιολ. Διάκονος κ. Ίωακείμ (τελευταίος δεξιά από τον Πατριάρχη).

Χειροτονία εις Διάκονον του Γρηγορίου Wellington

Στόν Ιερό Ναό της Αγίας Αικατερίνης Βαμπετ, Βορείου Λονδίνου, έλαβε χώρα την Κυριακή 26 Ιουνίου η χειροτονία εις Διάκονον, του έως τότε υποδιακόνου Gregory Wellington, από τη σεπτή δεξιά του Σεβασμιωτάτου Αρχιεπισκόπου Θυατείρων και Μεγάλης Βρετανίας κ. Γρηγορίου. Η χειροτονία ήταν συγκινητική καθώς στο Εκκλησιαστικό βρισκόταν η σύζυγος και η κόρη του Νεοχειροτονηθέντος, ενώ ο μικρός του υιός παρακολουθούσε από τό Ιερό τά τεκταινόμενο ως μαθητευόμενος Νεοκώρος. Την χειροτονία, η οποία τελείται πάντα εν μέσω της Θείας Λειτουργίας και συγκεκριμένα αμέσως μετά τον Άγιασμό των Τιμίων Δώρων, παρακολούθησαν και οι γονείς του πατρός Γρηγορίου, αλλά και άλλοι συγγενείς και φίλοι. Την ημέρα που εορτάζεται ο Όσιος Δαυίδ εν Θεσσαλονίκη, παραβρέθηκε για την χειροτονία ο πνευματικός του Διακόνου, Προστυπρεσβύτερος Σπυριδών Καλαϊτζόγλου από την Παναγία την Αχειροποίητο της Θεσσαλονίκης.



Άπονομή πιστοποιητικών της Σχολής Αγιογραφίας της 'Ελληνορθόδοξου Κοινότητας Αγίων Αντωνίου του Μεγάλου και Τιμίου Προδρόμου, Islington

Μέσα στο πλαίσιο των εκδηλώσεων για τα 45 χρόνια από την



Ίδρυση της Κοινότητας Αγίων Αντωνίου του Μεγάλου και Τιμίου Προδρόμου (Islington), το Σάββατο, 18 Ιουνίου 2011, παραμονή της εορτής των Αγίων Πάντων, τελέσθηκε στον ομώνυμο Ιερό Ναό, Μέγας Πανηγυρικός Έσπερινός, χοροστατούντος του Σεβασμιωτάτου Αρχιεπισκόπου Θυατείρων και Μεγάλης Βρετανίας κ. Γρηγορίου, ενώ έψαλε η χορωδία του Ναού υπό την διεύθυνση του κ. Μαρουλά.

Κατά την διάρκεια της Ακολουθίας του Έσπερινου ο Σεβασμιώτατος χειροθέτησε σε Οικονόμο τόν π. Θωμά Άρτέμη, έφημεριο του Ναού, ως αποτέλεσμα της αξιόπαινης προσφοράς και διακονίας του στην Ίερά Αρχιεπισκοπή.

Μετά το πέρας του Έσπερινού έγινε η άπονομή των πιστοποιητικών στους μαθητές των μαθημάτων της Αγιογραφίας, από τόν Σεβασμιώτατο Αρχιεπίσκοπο.

Στην εκδήλωση της άπονομης παρευρέθησαν και χαιρέτησαν η εκπρόσωπος του συλλόγου Έλληνοκυπρίων γυναικών «Αράχνη» κ. Έλευθερία Κωνσταντίνου, ο δάσκαλος της Αγιογραφίας κ. Έλευθερίος Φουλίδης και η Πρόεδρος της Κοινότητας κ. Νίτσα Σεργίδη η οποία, κατά τόν χαιρετισμό της, αναφέρθηκε στους κανόνες και τούς νόμους της Αγιογραφίας οι οποίοι βοηθούν τούς μαθητές στην μορφοποίηση του εσωτερικού τους κόσμου.

Μεταξύ των άλλων ανέφερε, ότι «η εικόνα είναι ένα άριστο μέσο που απλά και άθρομβά εισέρχεται στον ψυχικό κόσμο των μαθητών, αλλά και όλων των πιστών και βάζει την δική της σφραγίδα. Είναι η άριστη εισαγωγή στον κόσμο της Εκκλησίας. Σε έναν κόσμο με τόσο κοινωνικό σκότος, ο μαθητής της εικόνας διδάσκεται να αντιστέκεται και να έλπιζει. Τό φως της εικόνας τόν παρηγορεί. Τού χαρίζει μία διαφάνεια στην ζωή και τά έργα του. Η εικόνα για τόν μαθητή γίνεται ο μεγάλος δάσκαλός του».

Ο Σεβασμιώτατος Αρχιεπίσκοπος επισκέφθηκε την έκθεση των έργων των μαθητών, στην αίθουσα τελετών του Ναού, και συνεχάρη τούς μαθητές και τόν δάσκαλό τους για τήν ώραία προσπάθεια που καταβάλουν στον χώρο της Αγιογραφίας. (Τηλ: Ameng)

Έφυγε από τη ζωή ο Αρχιμανδρίτης Σωφρόνιος Παπαδόπουλος

Έφυγε από τη ζωή ο προσφίλης σε όλους, πρώην Ιερατικός Προϊστάμενος της κοινότητας Τριών Ιεραρχών, Leeds, Αρχιμανδρίτης Σωφρόνιος Παπαδόπουλος. Ο π. Σωφρόνιος απέβηκε στις 10 Ιουλίου του 2011, στο Νοσοκομείο της Πάφου, σε ηλικία 85 ετών.

Υπήρξε ο Ιερέας της εν λόγω κοινότητας του Leeds επί 33 έτη (άπτο 1966 μέχρι και την άφυτρερήση του, τό 1999). Ο π. Σωφρόνιος ήταν γιά τήν κοινότητα αυτή κάτι περισσότερο από Ιερέας. Ήταν άνθρωπος με ήγητικά προσόντα, ο οποίος άκούραστα, άδηγησε τήν νεοσύστατη μικρή Έλληνική κοινότητα του Leeds τό 1966, στην κοινότητα που γνωρίζουμε σήμερα. Όσοι είχαν τήν τιμή να υπηρετήσουν υπό τήν πνευματική καθοδήγηση του, γνωρίζουν πόσο ζήλο και ένθουσιασμό έχε γιά τά θέματα της κοινότητας και πόσο έμπειρος και ικανός ήγέτης ήταν. Όλοι θυμούνται επίσης τήν άψογη τάξη με τήν οποία τελούσε όλες τίς εκκλησιαστικές ακολουθίες και τά μυστήρια, και τήν μελωδική και δυνατή φωνή του με τήν οποία έψαλε τούς ύμνους στη Θεία Λειτουργία, στά μυστήρια και ιδιαίτερα στις ακολουθίες της Μεγάλης Εβδομάδας.

Η κηδεία του έτελέσθη στό Χλώρακα της έπαρχίας Πάφου. Τήν κοινότητα εκπροσώπησαν ο νύν Ιερατικός Προϊστάμενος π. Σαμουήλ Κουσιπογιάνης, ο Επίτιμος Πρόεδρος κ. Αντώνης Παύλου, ο Αντιπρόεδρος του ΔΣ κ. Ιάσωνας Καβάζης και ή πρώην Πρόεδρος της Βοηθητικής Αδελφότητας κα. Κατερίνα Θεοδώρου. Τό ΔΣ χρηματοδότησε ένα στεφάνι με τόν τελευταίο χαιρετισμό εκ μέρους όλων των μελών της κοινότητας. Στόν Ιερό Ναό τών Τριών Ιεραρχών έτελέσθη τρισάγιο στην μνήμη του π. Σωφρονίου τήν Κυριακή 17 Ιουλίου, ημέρα της Αγίας Μεγαλομάρτυρος Μαρίας.

Αιώνια του ή μνήμη.

(Ανάγερση από κοινοποίηση του κ. Κώστα Τσακνιδή, Πρόεδρου ΔΣ).

Η Έορτή των Αγίων Δώδεκα Αποστόλων στην ομώνυμη Κοινότητα

Μέ ιδιαίτερη κατάνυξη τελέσθηκαν οι έτήσιοι εορτασμοί πρós τήν



των Αγίων Δώδεκα Αποστόλων πὴν Τετάρτη 29ῃ Ἰουνίου καὶ Πέμπτῃ 30ῃ Ἰουνίου 2011.

Τὴς ἑρῆς Ἀκολουθίης τέλεσε ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων καὶ Μεγάλῃς Βρετανίας κ. Γρηγόριος, συμπαραστατούμενος ἀπὸ Ἀρχιερεῖς ἄλλων Ὁρθόδοξων Ἐκκλησιῶν, ποὺ ἐδρεύουν στὸ Λονδίνο.

Οἱ Ἀρχιερεῖς ποὺ πήραν μέρος ἦταν (ἀγγλιστῖ):

- His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira & Great Britain (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople)
- His Eminence Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh (Patriarchate of Moscow)
- The Most Revd Archbishop Iossif of Western & Southern Europe (Patriarchate of Romania)
- The Most Revd Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany & Great Britain (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia)
- The Most Revd Archbishop Anatoly of Kerch (Diocese of Sourozh)
- The Rt Revd Bishop Athanasios of Tropaëou (Archdiocese of Thyateira)

Ἀκόμη, πήραν μέρος μαζί με τοὺς ἑρῆς τοῦ Ναοῦ καὶ ἄλλοι ἑρῆς ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησία τῆς Ἀντιόχειας, τῆς Σερβίας καὶ ὅλων τῶν παραπάνω Ἐκκλησιῶν, συνοδεύοντας τοὺς Ἀρχιερεῖς τοὺς.

Ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος, τὴν ἰδίᾳ Τετάρτῃ 29ῃ Ἰουνίου, χειροτόνησε σὲ Διάκονο τὸν Πέτρο Γεωργίου, ὁ ὁποῖος θὰ ἐξυπηρετῇ τὴν Κοινότητα τῶν Ἁγίων Δώδεκα Αποστόλων.

Τὴν Πέμπτῃ μετὰ τὴν Θεία Λειτουργία ὅλοι οἱ Ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ ἀντιπρόσωποι τῶν Ὁρθόδοξων Ἐκκλησιῶν πραγματοποιοῦσαν τὴν καθιερωμένη 3ῃ Πανορθόδοξη συνέλευσή τους.

Τὴς ἑρῆς Ἀκολουθίης ἐλάμπρυναν με τὴν παρουσία καὶ τὴν φωνὴ τοὺς ὁ Ἀρχων Πρωτομάρτυς κ. Λυκούργος Ἀγγελόπουλος καὶ μετὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Βυζαντινῆς Χωροδίας ποὺ ἦσαν εἰδικὰ ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀθήνα.

Παρόντες στοὺς ἐπίσημους ἐορτασμούς ἦσαν ὁ Γενικός Πρόεδρος τῆς Κύπρου κ. Γεώργιος Γεωργίου, ὁ Ἀεροπορικός Ἀκόλουθος στὴν Ἑλληνική Πρεσβεία στὸ Λονδίνο Ἀντιομηνάγος Γεώργιος Τσιώτης, ὁ Πρόεδρος τῶν Ἑλληνορθόδοξων Κοινοτήτων Μεγάλῃς Βρετανίας κ. Μάριος Μηναιδῆς, ἄρκετοι Πρόεδροι Ἐκκλησιῶν καὶ ἄλλων σωματείων, καὶ πολλοὺς πιστῶν.

Ὁ πρόεδρος τῆς Κοινότητος, κ. Λούης Λοῖζου, καλωσόρισε τοὺς φιλοξενούμενους στὴν Κοινότητα καὶ προσέφερε, μετὰ τοῦ ἱερατικῶς Προϊσταμένου Πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου Ἰωσήφ Παλιούρα, δῶρα σὲ ὅλους.

Οἱ κυρίες τῆς Ἀδελφότητῆς με ἐπικεφαλῆς τὴν Πρόεδρο κ. Μαρία Χρονία, δεξιάθηκαν ὅλους τοὺς παρευρισκομένους.

(Ἀνάρτηση ἀπὸ κοινοποίηση τοῦ ἱερατικῶς Προϊσταμένου τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Ναοῦ Ἁγίων Δώδεκα Αποστόλων, Πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου Ἰωσήφ Παλιούρα)

Dedication of an icon in Lancaster



On the evening of Wednesday, 6th July 2011, an icon of Christ flanked by His Mother and St. John the Beloved Disciple, together with depictions of Sts. George the Great Martyr and Ann, Mother of the Theotokos, was dedicated at the Anglican priory church of St. Mary in Lancaster as an act of thanksgiving for Dennis G. Mendoras' year of office as High Sheriff of Lancashire (2010-2011). The icon, the work of the Romanian iconographer, Cristi Covrig, is here shown with the High Sheriff (to the right of the icon) and Father Iakovos Kassinos (who

represented His Eminence the Archbishop at the ceremony) and Cristi Covrig (to the left).

Ordinations

During the month of June, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain ordained two subdeacons to the Diaconate. On Sunday, 26th June, he ordained Gregory Wellington at the Greek Orthodox Church of St Catherine, Bamey, London, and on Wednesday, 29th June, he ordained Charalambos Georgiou (renaming him Petros) at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Twelve Apostles, Hatfield, Hertfordshire.

Third Meeting of the Pan-Orthodox Episcopal Assembly

On 30th June, the Bishops of the Pan-Orthodox Assembly for the British Isles held their third meeting at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Twelve Apostles, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. For the first time, the Bishops of the Assembly celebrated at the Divine Liturgy on the occasion of the host Community's patronal feast. Archbishop Gregorios, the Chairman of the Assembly, preached during the Divine Liturgy. Following the service, the Bishops were guests at a festal meal provided by the Community, after which the Bishops held their meeting. The Bishops discussed preparation for Holy Communion, mixed marriages, canonical matters regarding the transfer of clergy from one diocese to another, catechetical materials, and the training of clergy and catechists.

The General Synod of the Church of England

Between 8th and 12th July, the General Synod of the Church of England met in York. His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and all Albania was the special ecumenical guest of the Synod and of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, who introduced Archbishop Anastasios to the Synod as the Christian leader who had rebuilt the church in Albania after 1990. In his address to the Synod, Archbishop Anastasios noted that "from 1967 to 1990, an atheistic constitution which banned all expressions of religion brought about the complete dissolution of the church in Albania."

In 1991 he arrived for the first time in Albania in Tirana as the newly appointed leader of the church.

"Together with a group of old and harassed men, we made our way from the airport to the ruined Cathedral of Tirana. In order to express the essential message of my mission, I asked each one of those present to take a candle, and inquired how to say the greeting "Christ is risen!" in Albanian. I lit the candle exclaiming, "Kristi ungjall", that is, "Christ is Risen". One after the other, the candles of the few believers were lit and they answered: "Vertete ungjall", "Truly He is Risen!" And their eyes were full of tears and light. From then on, "Christ is Risen" has become the watchword of the Orthodox Church in Albania."

"I visited as many cities and villages as possible where there had formerly been Orthodox communities. People began to come together and hear the Gospel message at Liturgies, most of which took place in the open air – under trees or in the ruins of old churches. The central message of the sermons, of the instructional effort, of the spiritual activities was that Christ – crucified, buried and risen – is "the light of the world". There is hope, however dark everything may seem".

"Altogether 150 new churches were built, 160 smaller churches were restored and 70 buildings to house the administration of the dioceses, schools, medical centres... About 460 parishes were organised in towns and villages."

Archbishop Anastasios of Albania receives the Lambeth Cross

The Lambeth Cross, a distinction for foreign church leaders, was recently awarded to Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, by Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Upon receiving the cross, Archbishop Anastasios quoted T.S. Eliot: "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?", adding among other things the need for everyone to "approach and familiarize themselves with the 'wisdom of the cross'." The Archbishop of Canterbury said: "The revival of the Orthodox Church in Albania is owing most to its leader, whose spiritual and intellectual capabilities, his character's strength, his humility and holiness, have been a beacon for many in the Europe of our time".

Obituaries

In July, three priests who served our Holy Archdiocese reposed in the Lord: Archimandrite Sophronios Papadopoulos, Archimandrite Athanasios Ledwich, and Oeconomos Andreas Ioannides.

Archimandrite Sophronios Papadopoulos passed away on Sunday, 10th July 2011 at Paphos Hospital at the age of 85. He served as priest-in-charge of the Community of the Three Hierarchs, Leeds, for 33 years (1966-1999). He was a gifted leader who laboured for the then newly established and small Greek Orthodox Community of Leeds to become the thriving Community it is today. He will be remembered by all for his devotion and his zeal for every aspect of church life.

Archimandrite Athanasios Ledwich departed this life on Wednesday, 20th July 2011 at St Helena's Hospital in Colchester at the age of 64. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, and was a priest of the Anglican Church before he became Orthodox. He was made a Deacon of the Orthodox Church in 1986 and a Priest in 1987 by Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira. As a priest he served the Orthodox Communities of Rugby, Colchester and Ipswich. He established an Orthodox school in Edgbaston, Birmingham, and the Hermitage of the Most-holy Mother of God in Manningtree, North Essex.

Oeconomos Andreas Ioannides was ordained Deacon and Priest in the year 1968 and served the Community of the Holy Trinity, Brighton for many years until 2004, when he returned to Cyprus.

HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP GREGORIOS' DIARY

MAY

1. In the morning, His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of St. George the Great Martyr in Kingston-upon-Thames, being entertained to lunch by the Community afterwards.
2. In the morning, he received Lavrentios Lavretiadis. In the evening, he presided at a meeting in connection with the establishment of a Greek Orthodox Secondary School in North London.
3. In the morning, he presided at the funeral of Mrs. Maria Petrou Yiannoulou at the church of St. John the Theologian in Hackney.
4. He left for Constantinople in the morning. On arrival, he was received in private audience by His All-Holiness. Later, he had supper with the other Synodic bishops.
5. Throughout the day, he participated in sessions of the Holy Synod. In the evening, he was a guest at a Dinner held at Beyti's restaurant in Florya.
6. In the morning, he visited various offices within the Patriarchate and then participated in sessions of the Holy Synod.
7. He returned from Constantinople in the morning. In the evening, he was present at the annual Gala Ball of the Hellenic Bankers' Society, held at Claridge's in Mayfair.
8. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of St. John the Theologian in Hackney on the occasion of one of its title feasts, being entertained to lunch by the Community afterwards. In the afternoon, he received Miss Melissa Birol.
9. He left for Nottingham in the morning to preside at the conference of the Archdiocesan Clergy. At midday, he had lunch with the conferees at the hall of the church of the Mother of God 'The Merciful' in New Lenton, following which he presided at the Conference's first session, which he addressed on the subject 'The Holy Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain: Problems and Perspectives, Present and Future'. Later in the afternoon, he presided at the Conference's second session, following which he was present at Vespers celebrated at the church of the Mother of God. In the evening, he presided at the Conference's Formal Dinner, held at the Nottingham Gateway Hotel.
10. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of Ss. Cyril & Methodius in Huthwaite (Mansfield), afterwards presiding at the Conference's third session, held on the church's premises. After lunch at the church hall, he joined the conferees in visiting Newstead Abbey, the birthplace of Lord Byron, there celebrating a Trisagion for the philhellene peer, a hero of the Greek War of Independence. Returning to Huthwaite, he was present at Vespers celebrated at the church there, being entertained to supper by the Community afterwards. He then returned to Nottingham.
11. In the morning, he was present at the Divine Liturgy celebrated at the church of the Mother of God in New Lenton, following which he presided at the final session of the Conference. He returned to London in the late afternoon.
12. In the morning, he presided at a Trisagion in the Chapel of the Archdiocese for reposed members of the family of Spyros Metaxas. Afterwards, he received Savvas Charalambous. During the afternoon, he received Mrs. Annie Bertschi, Eduards Stiprais (Ambassador of Latvia), and Georgios Arghyris.
13. At midday, he had lunch with Kypros Nicholas at a restaurant near his offices. During the afternoon, he received Andreas Avgoustis and Hieromonk Patrick Ramsey.
14. In the evening, he was a guest at the Greek Evening organised yearly by the Community of the Holy Apostles in Brookman's Park (Hatfield), and held at Challoner School in Brookman's Park.
15. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of Ss. Cyril & Methodius in Huthwaite (Mansfield), during which he conferred the office of Protopresbyter on Oeconomos Phokas Hadjiloizis and that of Oeconomos on Father Elias Michael. Afterwards, he was entertained to lunch by the Community.
16. At midday, he was a guest at the celebration of the 63rd Anniversary of the Independence of the State of Israel, held at the Park Plaza in Westminster. In the evening, he was a guest at Michael Christodoulidis' 90th birthday celebrations, held at the Greek-Cypriot Brotherhood.
17. In the morning, he received Philios Grammenopoulos. At midday, he entertained Professor Richard Clogg & Dr. Charalambos Dendrinis to lunch. In the evening, he was present at the election of Cllr. Mrs. Lisa Rutter as Mayor of Barnet at the Town Hall, and at the reception there

held in continuation. Returning to Thyateira House, he presided at a meeting of the Trustees of the Community of St. Demetrius in Edmonton.

18. During the morning, he received Miss Ioulia Oekiadou and Mesdames Panaghiota Soulele, Charoula Georghopoulou & Heleana Grigoriou. During the afternoon, he received Gregory & Christiana Wellington, Dionysios Pantazis, and Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia. In the evening, he was present at Anglican Evensong and an Ecumenical Reception held at Lambeth Palace under the auspices of the Nikaeen Club.
19. In the morning, he presided at the funeral of Mrs. Marika G. Hadji-Kyriakou at the church of St. Nicholas in Southampton, followed by the interment at the local cemetery (where he also read Trisaghia for Orthodox Christians buried there).
20. He received Mrs. Efthymia Tricha in the morning and Costas Christophidis, Miss Aphrodite Pavlou, and Ioannis Kyriakidis during the afternoon. In the evening, he received Andreas Ioannou, Georgios Kallis & Antonios Theodorou, and then visited K. Stavroula, a patient at St. Mary's Hospital Paddington.
21. In the evening, he was a guest at the St. Helen's Ladies' Buffet Dinner & Dance, held at the Hall of the Community of Holy Cross & St. Michael the Archangel in Golders Green.
22. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of the Transfiguration of Christ the Saviour in Coventry, being entertained to lunch by the Community afterwards and where he presided at a meeting of the church council and the church's trustees. Returning to London, he was a guest at a dinner given at the Russian Embassy by the Ambassador & Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh to celebrate the Day of Slavic Writing and Culture.
23. In the morning, he received Miss Anna Stacy-Altman. During the afternoon, he received two members of the Committee of the Community of Brighton & Hove (who were accompanied by Archimandrite Germanos Kourkounis), Michael & Tanya Turner, and Miss Polyxeni Nikolaou.
24. He received Savvas & Stelios Violaris in the morning and Ioannis Kouvaros in the afternoon.
25. In the morning, he received Ioannis Polykandriotis, Mrs. Ioulia Erotokritou & Mesdames Eirini & Katerina Krimitsiou. At midday, he had lunch with Haris & Mary Sophokleidis at the La Genova restaurant in Mayfair.
26. In the morning, he addressed an Inter-Faith Conference entitled 'Exploring the Role of Faith in Public Life' at St. Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in London's Bishopsgate, organised under the auspices of Religions for Peace (United Kingdom). In the afternoon, he left London's Heathrow Airport for Prague, being received at the airport by His Beatitude Metropolitan Christofor.
27. In the morning, he was taken to see some of the sights of Prague.
28. In the morning, he participated as representative of His All-Holiness the Oecumenical Patriarch in the Divine Liturgy celebrated at the Cathedral of Ss. Cyril & Methodius in Prague to mark the 5th anniversary of the election of Archbishop Christofor as Metropolitan of the Czech Lands and Slovakia and at which the metropolitan presided. Also participating were hierarchs representing the Patriarchates of Moscow, Romania, Bulgaria & Georgia and the Churches of Greece & Poland. He returned from the Czech Republic in the evening.
29. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of Ss. Mary & Marina in Longton (Stoke-on-Trent), being entertained to lunch by the Community afterwards. In the afternoon, he blessed the marriage of Constantinos Demetrios Markou and Jade Ella Mason at the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God & St. Andrew the Apostle in Birmingham, being present at the reception held at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel afterwards.
30. During the afternoon, he received Pantelis Haghiotis and Markos Elgrohary.
31. During the morning, he received the Hellenic Ambassador, Aristeidis Sandis, and Demetrios Salapatas. At midday, he entertained Georgios Orphanos & his daughter, Georgia, to lunch. In the afternoon, he received Dr. Iskra Kocova.

JUNE

1. In the morning, he visited the studios of London Greek Radio. At midday, he entertained Mr. Papatolias to lunch. During the afternoon, he received Ioannis Pareas and Konstantinos Kalathos.
2. In the morning, he presided at the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Divine Wisdom in Bayswater, preaching the Word of God. During the

- afternoon, he was interviewed by Miss Nina Dos Santos of C.N.N. (News), and received Aleksandr Nekrashov (who was accompanied by Zonas Bichenov).
3. In the early morning (and together with a group of pilgrims), he left for Turkey to visit churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Leaving London's Heathrow Airport, he flew first to Constantinople and from there to Izmir (Smyrna), from where he travelled to Denizli (near ancient Laodicea), spending the night there.
 4. During the day, he visited the ruins of Laodicea and Hierapolis (Pamukkale), at the latter of which he saw the hot springs and the Martyrium of St. Philip. He again spent the night in Denizli.
 5. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of St. Photini in Smyrna and then saw something of the city that is so redolent with memories of its former glories and tragic history. He then travelled to Akhisar (Thyateira, the city from which he takes his episcopal title) in the afternoon, visiting the ruins of the ancient basilica in the centre of the town, offering prayers there for the Faithful of the Archdiocese, and spending the night there.
 6. In the morning, he visited Pergamos (Bergama), where he saw the famous Classical temples and the 'Red Basilica', and Sardis (Sart Koy), with its Classical, Jewish and Christian sites, afterwards returning to Thyateira where he again spent the night.
 7. In the morning, he visited Philadelphia (Alasehir), where he saw the remains of the C11 Christian church, before returning to Smyrna. From there, he flew to Constantinople, from the airport of which he went to the Patriarchate.
 8. During the day, he participated in meetings of the Holy Synod. In the evening, he visited an exhibition entitled 'Greek Painters of Istanbul / Istanbul Rum Ressamlar', held in the Imperial Stables of Topkapi Palace Museum.
 9. During the day, he participated in sessions of the Holy Synod. In the evening, he was present at Great Vespers in the Patriarchal church, celebrated for the (transferred) feast of Ss. Barnabas & Bartholomew.
 10. In the morning, he was present at the Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Patriarchal church on the occasion of the nameday of His All-Holiness Patriarch Vartholomaios (and at which he presided). Afterwards, he had the opportunity of congratulating His All-Holiness in the name of the Faithful of the Archdiocese. At midday, he was among those entertained by the Patriarch to a celebratory lunch at a restaurant. He returned from Constantinople in the evening.
 11. In the evening, he was a guest at a Dinner given by the Greek Orthodox Community in Golders Green.
 12. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Divine Wisdom in Bayswater and then presided at Kneeling Vespers there.
 13. In the morning, he presided at the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Divine Wisdom in Bayswater, preaching the Word of God. In the afternoon, he received Nikolaos Aemiliou (Director-General of the Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and who was accompanied by the Cyprus High Commissioner, Georgios Christofi & Georgios Georgiou.
 14. Throughout the day, he participated in Informal Talks between the Oecumenical Patriarchate and the Anglican Communion, held at Lambeth Palace. Returning to Thyateira House, he received Georgios Tritos.
 15. During the afternoon, he received Charalambos & Michaela Georgiou and Archimandrite Christodoulos Persopoulos.
 16. At midday, he received Archbishop Gabriel of Comana and Archpriests John Marks & Alexander Fostiropoulos, afterwards entertaining them to lunch. During the evening, he received Garo Keheyian and Arghyrios & Nedi Hadjivassiliou.
 17. In the morning, he presided at a meeting of the Pan-Orthodox Assembly's Educational Committee, afterwards entertaining the delegates to a buffet lunch. During the evening, he received Constantinos Papoglou and presided at a Trisagion for the late Mrs. Galatia Kalogherou in the Chapel of the Archdiocese.
 18. In the morning, he received Constantinos Severis. In the evening, he presided at Great Vespers at the church of Ss. Anthony & John the Baptist in Holloway, during which he conferred the office of Oeconomos on Father Thomas Artemi. He also presented diplomas to students of the Arachne & St. Anthony's School of Iconography. In continuation, he opened an exhibition of photographs at the Cyprus Community Centre in Palmers Green devoted to Akanthou in Cyprus and was a guest at the Hellenic Medical Society's annual Dinner & Dance at the Hellenic Centre.
 19. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of St. Nicholas in Southampton that was followed by the 40-day Memorial Service for the late Mrs. Marika G. Hadji-Kyriakou. In continuation, he visited the cemetery for prayers at the graveside. He was entertained to lunch at George's Restaurant in Southampton.
 20. In the afternoon, he received Mrs. Loxandra Kyriakidou. In the evening, he presided at a meeting of the St. Nicholas' Educational Trust.
 21. He received Father Demetrios Kontelidis in the morning and Protopresbyter Joseph Paliouras & Miss Maria Briana in the afternoon. In the evening, he was present at a meeting of graduates of the Pan-Cyprian Gymnasium, held on the premises of the Greek-Cypriot Brotherhood in North Finchley.
 22. He received Father Andreas Pittas in the morning and Father Ion Damalan & his presbytera during the afternoon. In the evening, he presided at a meeting of the Governors of St. Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary School in Thornton Heath (Croydon).
 23. During the afternoon, he received the representatives of the committee of the Community in Leeds (together with the parish-priest, Father Samuel Kouspoghennis), Lakis Pierettis, and George Richards. In the evening, he presided at a meeting for the establishment of a Greek Orthodox Secondary School in North London.
 24. He received Lambis Tsirigotakis in the morning and Inigo Woolfe & Ioannis Pareas and Archimandrite Theonas Bakalis during the afternoon.
 25. In the afternoon, he received Diamandis Kouridis. In the evening, he blessed the opening of the Cyprus Wine Festival & Business Exhibition 2011 at the Great Hall of Alexander Palace.
 26. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of St. Catherine in Barnet, during the course of which he ordained Gregory Wellington to the Diaconate and was entertained to lunch by the Community afterwards. In the evening, he baptised Soterios, the infant son of Elliott Ashurst & Michelle Poulengeris in the Chapel of the Archdiocese, following which he was entertained to supper at the Aphrodite Restaurant (at which Professor Konstantinos & Aekaterini Svolopoulos were his guests).
 27. During the afternoon, he received Miss Heleni Xanthopoulou, Efthymios Panzopoulos, and Demetrios Arghyris. During the afternoon, he visited Mrs. Daphne Eliadou (a patient at University College Hospital), and he received Miss Maria Vaghiena, and the clergy of the church of St. John the Baptist in Hornsey. In the evening, he presided at a meeting of the Trust of the Archdiocese.
 28. In the morning, he presided at the funeral of Mrs. Angeliki Nikola at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Camberwell. At midday, he received Father Apostolos Almaliotis. In the evening, he was present at a reception given by the Apostolic Nuncio at Archbishop's House in Westminster to celebrate the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI and the 60th anniversary of his priestly ordination.
 29. In the morning, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of the Holy Apostles in Brookman's Park, during which he ordained Charalambos Georgiou to the diaconate, conferring on his the name of Petros. He was entertained to lunch by the Community afterwards.
 30. In the morning, he presided by a concelebrated Pan-Orthodox Liturgy at the church of the Holy Apostles in Brookman's Park (Hatfield), on the occasion of its title feast. In continuation, the hierarchs and other clergy were entertained to lunch by the Community, following which he presided at a meeting of the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops in the British Isles.

During the months of May and June, His Eminence was represented by:

Bishop Chrysostomos of Kyanea at the funeral of Ioannis Kontoghiannis (10/6);
Bishop Athanasios of Tropaeou at the Divine Liturgy at the church of Ss. Constantine & Helen in Upper Norwood (22/5), the Christian Brotherhood of St. Ambrosios' Dinner & Dance (5/6), a reception at the Hellenic Embassy in honour of the Great British Team for the 2011 World Summer Games of the Special Olympics to be held in Athens (6/6), a lecture delivered by Prof. Malcolm Evans at Lambeth Palace (8/6), the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of All Saints Camden Town (19/6);
Protopresbyter Andreas Hadjisavvi at the Ashmole Independent Greek Schools' Dinner & Dance (18/6);
Father Pavlos Gregoriou at the Greek Parents' Association's Music from the Greek Cinema (15/5);
Deacon Meliton Oakes at a concert of Coptic Sacred Music entitled 'The Anointed Servant' (1/5), a Europe Day Concert at St. John's Smith Square (9/5), a lecture concerning the City of Alexandria at the Hellenic Centre (11/5), the Ionian Society's Heptanisian Spring Party (21/5), the midday & afternoon sessions of the Inter-Faith Conference at St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation (26/5), the Annual General Meeting of the Churches' Legislation Advisory Service (8/6), a reception for the British School at Athens, held in the presence of HRH The Prince of Wales (9/6), an Inter-Faith Dialogue-Seminar at London's Islamic Cultural Centre (16/6); &
Deacon Konstantinos Theocharous at the presentation of a book by Sotos Zakheos at the Cypriot Community Centre (16/5).

Φωτογραφικά στιγμιότυπα από διάφορες εκδηλώσεις του Αρχιεπισκόπου



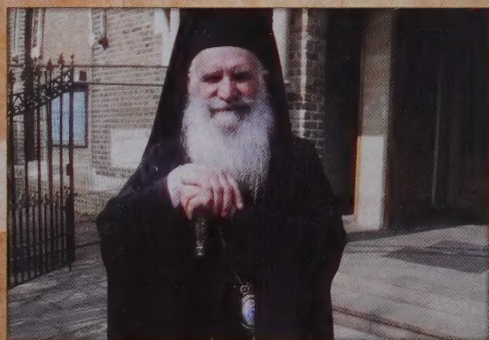
Ο Σεβασμιώτατος Αρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων
και Μ. Βρετανίας κ. Γρηγόριος, Coventry, 22 Μαΐου 2011



Ο Σεβασμιώτατος Αρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων
και Μ. Βρετανίας κ. Γρηγόριος, Coventry, 22 Μαΐου 2011



Ο Σεβασμιώτατος
Αρχιεπίσκοπος
Θυατείρων
και Μ. Βρετανίας
κ. Γρηγόριος,
Norwich, Μάιος 2011



Ο Σεβασμιώτατος Αρχιεπίσκοπος Θυατείρων
και Μ. Βρετανίας κ. Γρηγόριος, Καθεδρικός Ναός
Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου, Wood Green, 25 Μαρτίου 2011



Ο Θεοφιλέστατος Επίσκοπος Τροπαίου κ. Αθανάσιος,
ο Γενικός Πρόξενος της Κύπρου κ. Γιώργος Γεωργίου
(ομιλών) και ο Γενικός Πρόξενος της Ελλάδος κ. Ευθύμιος
Παντζόπουλος (δεξιά καθήμενος), στους εορτασμούς της
«Ημέρας της Κύπρου» που διοργανώθηκε επιτυχώς από τον
Σύνδεσμο Ελληνορθόδοξων Κοινοτήτων στην Κοινότητα του
Αποστόλου Βαρνάβα, Βορείου Λονδίνου.



Ο Θεοφιλέστατος Επίσκοπος Τροπαίου κ. Αθανάσιος και
Ιερείς και Διάκονοι της Ιεράς Αρχιεπισκοπής Θυατείρων
και Μεγάλης Βρετανίας, κατά την εορτή των Αγίων
Αποστόλου Βαρνάβα και Βαρθολομαίου, στην Κοινότητα
Αποστόλου Βαρνάβα Βορείου Λονδίνου.